

THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

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CONTENTS

The Chateau of Montplasir	<i>Molly Elliot Seawell</i>	1
His Dreams	<i>R. K. Munkittrick</i>	63
Hashimoto	<i>Stephen French Whitman</i>	65
The Unspoken Word	<i>Edith M. Thomas</i>	73
After All	<i>Elsa Barker</i>	74
A Fable	<i>Blanche Goodman</i>	74
The Man on Horseback	<i>Elizabeth Duer</i>	75
The Haunted Woodland	<i>Madison Cawein</i>	79
The Empty House	<i>Leila Burton Wells</i>	81
An Anniversary	<i>Charles Buxton Going</i>	88
Studio Sweepings	<i>James L. Ford</i>	89
The Hunt	<i>William Griffith</i>	98
The Sea-Born	<i>Theodosia Garrison</i>	99
Apples of Eden	<i>Catalina Pdez</i>	101
The Call of the City	<i>Arthur Stringer</i>	106
The Eighth Deadly Sin	<i>James Huneker</i>	107
Perfection	<i>Ruby Archer</i>	114
The Man, the Maid and the Machine	<i>Cecil Carlisle Pangman</i>	115
Codfish Aristocracy	<i>Wallace Irwin</i>	125
The Masque of Venus	<i>Kate Masterson</i>	127
The Family Pack	<i>Felix Carmen</i>	130
The Measure of His Greatness	<i>Henry Sydnor Harrison</i>	131
The Weapons of a Gentleman	<i>Frederick Trevor Hill</i>	141
The Light that Failed	<i>Madeleine Bridges</i>	146
L'Absent	<i>Georges Maurevert</i>	147
Fulfilment	<i>Mabel Earle</i>	150
Dorothea's Aunt Jane	<i>Ruth Kimball Gardiner</i>	151
A Song at Evening	<i>Virginia Woodward Cloud</i>	160

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"THE SMART SET" FOR OCTOBER

The novelette which will open the next number is a refreshing story of the West by a writer who thoroughly knows the country and people he describes with such rare charm. It is called

"When Cupid Came to Nine-Bar," By William R. Lighton.

Short stories, covering a wide range, will be conspicuous in the October issue. The writers will be Edna Kenton, Robert Mackay, Herbert D. Ward, Lucia Chamberlain, Elizabeth Jordan, Rose K. Weekes and Virginia Woodward Cloud. The essay will be from the brilliant pen of Julien Gordon (Mrs. Van Rensselaer Cruger).

Among the notable contributions in verse will be Zona Gale's "Ballades of the Five Senses." Other poems by Florence Wilkinson, Martha Gilbert Dickinson Bianchi, Madison Cawein, Arthur Stringer and Theodosia Garrison will also appear.

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THE CHATEAU OF MONTPLASIR

By Molly Elliot Seawell

LOUIS VICTOR DE LATOUR, recently become lord of the Chateau of Montplasir, sat, the picture of misery, at a window of the grand salon of the chateau looking out upon the gray sea. To the right of him, and visible through the misty veil of falling rain, lay the usually merry watering-place of Dinard, now—like everything else in sight—dripping wet and forlorn. The sky was gloomier than the sea, and the chateau the gloomiest of all. It was an immense pile, with a great courtyard in the middle, where the flagstones, like everything else about the place, were cracked and broken. Half the windows were out and the other half boarded up. There were some few wrecks and remnants of furniture in the salon where the new owner sat, but these wrecks and remnants were huddled in one corner, the only spot secure from the rain, which dripped ceaselessly from the glass dome in the centre.

As for Louis de Latour, he had been counted the merriest and lightest-hearted fellow alive as long as he had scarcely a franc in his pocket; but now that he had come into his inheritance he appeared to be on the verge of suicide. He was good-looking and well made and had been reckoned to be of dauntless courage; but it must be admitted that the Chateau of Montplasir was enough to take the courage out of a Julius Cæsar.

Louis sat at a rickety little table, taking what he called by courtesy his midday breakfast, which consisted of weak coffee, stale bread and something which old Suzette, who in herself constituted the whole domestic staff of

the Chateau of Montplasir, represented as a salad. But Louis, after tasting it, had determined that it was a collection of weeds grown between the broken flagstones of the courtyard.

"Yes," he said sadly, holding up a piece of the green stuff on his fork and looking out into the courtyard, "it is the same. Suzette thinks to impose upon my innocence, but I do know chicory from milkweed. However, she is quite justified. Any man who would accept this old rattletrap as a gift could be imposed upon by anybody in anything. And how delighted I was to get it, and how I used to mention casually, in the days when I was an engineer looking for work, that the seat of my family was the Chateau of Montplasir, near Dinard! If anybody would ask me now about the seat of my family, I should deny that I ever saw or heard of such a place as Montplasir. I am convinced that my cousin who left it to me had a secret grudge against me. That man was my enemy during life, and determined to punish me at his death. I can neither sell it, nor lease it, nor live in it, nor give it away. But one thing remains—"

Here Louis paused, and, getting up from his chair, walked about the room, surveyed it critically, and then leaned out of a window opening upon the courtyard.

"Yes," he said to himself, coming back to the table, "I now know what to do with it. It is perfectly practicable. I can burn it up, if only I had the money to buy the combustibles. But at least I can try. No harm can come of it, because it is not insured—no company would insure the

place for five hundred francs. I shall at least have the biggest bonfire of the year. Sympathy will be excited for me by my having lost my ancestral chateau. I shall represent it to have been filled with priceless treasures of art. This room I shall say was equipped with real Louis Quatorze furniture and pictures by Greuze and Horace Vernet. The dining-saloon, which is the barest hole I ever saw in my life and must always have been, I shall say was hung with tapestries of the same period of that of Bayeux. There is a moldy old picture in there which answers exactly the description of a Salvator Rosa. It is very black, very dirty, and nobody could possibly make out the subject. I shall represent that as one of Salvator Rosa's masterpieces —after it is burned up. Then I shall also decorate that room with Paul Veroneses and Titians, and perhaps I shall throw in a Raphael or two—I can afford to lose them in the fire because I never had them. I shall spend the rest of today making out a list of the valuables which I intend to lose. It will get in the newspapers, and then it may reach the eyes of Julie de Brésac."

As the thought of this charming girl occurred to him, Louis threw himself back in his chair with an increase of his despair. He had met her in Algiers, that place of sunshine and merriment, and Julie herself was a creature of sunshine and merriment. She was young, lovely and heiress to a great fortune. Louis was young, handsome, clever, and at that time heir to nothing at all. But he and Julie were of the same class and caste, the best in France.

And Julie had an old aunt, the Comtesse de Beauregard, who, for pure gaiety of heart, prankishness and an ineradicable passion for sowing wild oats, was quite incomparable. She was a very gay old person indeed, and Louis would have preferred that Julie should have had some other guardian than this scapegrace old lady. But at least, as Madame de Beauregard was the most unconventional person who ever lived, she allowed Julie a degree of liberty quite unknown to any

other young lady of Louis de Latour's acquaintance. This he had utilized in the most artful manner in Algiers, and had contrived to see Julie often enough and intimately enough to reveal the secret of his heart to her and to draw from her a sweet, unspoken acknowledgment. For Julie was very sweet, with all her wildness, one-half of which she was incited to by the irrepressible Madame de Beauregard. Louis's first thought, on hearing of his inheritance, had been that he could make Julie the mistress of the Chateau of Montplasir, but the notion of it now staggered him.

"She would be eaten up by the rats," he groaned aloud. "The idea of showing Julie this place, of letting her know that I was so cruelly imposed upon, is harrowing to my feelings. Oh, Julie, Julie!"

Then old Suzette poked her nose in the door. She had a face as brown and hard as a hickory nut, but there was a twinkle in her eyes which sometimes reminded Louis of the wicked gleam in the merry old eyes of Madame de Beauregard. Just as she entered a raindrop splashed upon Louis's nose. There was an umbrella standing in the corner, and Louis seized it and was about to open it over his head when Suzette, rushing forward, wrenched it out of his hand.

"Oh, monsieur," she cried, "don't you know it is bad luck to put up an umbrella in the house?"

"Do you call this a house?" replied Louis. "I don't. And which is the worse luck—to put up an umbrella or to die of pneumonia? Last night I slept under that umbrella—I fastened it to the head of my bed."

"Oh, heavens!" cried Suzette in a frantic voice, "how could you so tempt ill-fortune?"

"I tempted ill-fortune enough when I accepted this old barrack, but my excuse is that I did not know how to get out of it."

"It would be a fine place, monsieur," said Suzette, clearing off the table, "if you had a million of francs to put it in order."

"And five million more to live upon. Do you know anywhere that I could pick up six million francs? At present I have exactly six francs, fifty centimes in my pocket."

"At least," said old Suzette, "it is a good place from which to date your letters. It would look well on your writing-paper."

"Oh, yes," replied Louis sarcastically, "and I might give an account of my domestic staff as follows: House-keeper, Madame Suzette Didier; cook, Suzette Didier; butler, Didier; *valet de chambre*, Suzette. Some day I shall get lost in this infernal place, and you will find me eaten up by the rats, as I am afraid my sweet Julie would be."

"And who is Mademoiselle Julie, monsieur?"

"An angel, a ray of sunshine, a star, an exquisite flower, a gem of dazzling beauty."

"Oh, the young lady you are in love with! That's the way my Pierre used to talk about me fifty years ago. Lovers are all alike, monsieur, in every rank of life."

"But when she sees that I consented to accept this dismal old barrack I shall earn her everlasting contempt."

"Come, now, monsieur," said Suzette, "don't be so downhearted. You are not at all bad-looking."

"Thank you a thousand times."

"And I have seen stupider men."

"Oh, no, never! The possession of this chateau has forever ruined the reputation for any good sense I have had."

"Now, don't say that. When things are at their worst they always begin to mend."

"Do they? Then just look around and see if there is a fire smoldering anywhere, and don't put it out. But it would be just my luck, as soon as the fire was started, to have a pouring rain come down just like this. However, that hope remains. Go, and if you smell smoke come and tell me; and remember, whatever you do, don't try to put the fire out."

As Suzette opened the door to go out she almost walked over an elderly

gentleman just entering. He was one of those persons who bear the stamp of prosperity all over them. His clothes were the handsomest make, his umbrella, his watch-chain, everything about him betokened the man who goes into a great shop and asks for the best. He was clean-shaven and had a very intelligent nose, pompous ears and a smiling and liberal mouth. But his ruddy countenance was more marked than is usually found among the merely rich, and he had a pair of gray-blue eyes which indicated a strange mixture of artlessness and shrewdness. Suzette took his dripping umbrella, and then, advancing, he made a very polite bow to Louis—who rose courteously—and said to him, handing a card:

"May I introduce myself? I am Monsieur Victor Louis de Latour, and I hope it is not presumptuous in me to claim descent from the great family of de Latour, of which this chateau has been the seat for two centuries."

"As a descendant of the great house of de Latour, may I ask you to take the best of the only two chairs in the chateau which my ancestors have imposed upon me?" said Louis, offering the only other chair in the room besides the one in which he himself had sat.

Monsieur de Latour seated himself and smiled benignly.

"I am exceedingly grateful," he said, "that you should receive me as a relative and as a humble member of a distinguished family."

"My dear sir," replied Louis, "I am glad you take it as a compliment. For my part, I hate every ancestor I ever had. They appear to have had no sort of consideration for me whatever. They left me this old ruin, which I don't believe has had ten francs' worth of repairs on it in the last hundred years. But they took pretty good care to build substantial monuments to themselves in the church yonder"—pointing from the window—"comfortable tombs without a crack in them and without a leak in a single place. That is the way of the world—every man for himself."

"Do you mean to tell me," said Monsieur de Latour, glancing around him, "that you have no means to repair this chateau?"

"I have at present six francs, fifty centimes," replied Louis. "That is hardly worth applying to such a purpose."

Monsieur de Latour looked about him as if doubtful whether the other were a lunatic or not, but Louis's calm and graceful manner and smiling eyes were reassuring.

"Oh, I see," cried Monsieur de Latour, "you inherited the chateau and nothing with it."

"Oh, yes," replied Louis, "I inherited an army of rats and the most beautiful views in France from every window in the chateau; but, unluckily, I am afraid of the rats, who are much more comfortable here than I am, and I can neither eat the view nor sell it, nor raise money on it—so it is practically of no use to me at all."

"Then what do you propose to do with the property?"

"I have considered the matter gravely, and I propose to burn it up."

"Oh, come, now," said Monsieur de Latour encouragingly, and drawing his chair closer to that of Louis, "don't be so desperate as all that. Since you have been so confidential with me, and as we are members of the same family, I will be equally confidential with you. Although I have always yearned to be recognized as a member of the distinguished family of de Latour, I admit that I have no proof, and my calling might be considered against me. I am a soap-boiler."

"I assure you," said Louis, "I have no prejudice whatever against soap."

"That's because you don't know what goes into it," replied Monsieur de Latour. "For my part, I have not used a piece of soap for twenty years. I use this instead."

He took out of his pocket a little box of fine white sand, showed it to Louis and then put it back.

"But I have always had a soul above soap-boiling. I began at it when I was a mere lad in the soap-boiling factory

of Cheri, and a better man than old Cheri never lived. Twenty years ago I started in business on my own account, and today I can retire at any moment that I like, with a fortune twice as large as I have hoped to accumulate. Now, as you see, I am not an old man, and I have determined to stop work and enjoy my fortune while I can. Two things are necessary to my enjoyment of it—the first that I shall be recognized as a member of the distinguished family of de Latour, and the second is that I shall marry."

"Pray proceed," said Louis; "I am most interested in all you tell me. So far as I am concerned, I can only say that I should, at present, gladly recognize a ragpicker who had a fortune as a member of my family."

Old de Latour laughed at this.

"At least, I am not as bad as that. All I want is a good batch of ancestors."

"And all I want," said Louis, "is to get rid of my ancestors, for they have brought nothing but misfortune upon me."

"Very well, why couldn't we come to an agreement? Money for ancestors, eh?"

"I should be perfectly delighted. I will take one hundred francs for the whole lot."

"Oh, you are trifling. What I mean is this—that you should recognize me as a relative. This would enable me to use the de Latour crest, and it would make those idiots in my native town of Brionville, who have laughed at my pretensions, laugh on the other side of their faces. Couldn't you perch me somewhere on the family tree?"

"On the very highest branch, if you like."

"Young man," said Monsieur de Latour, drawing still closer to Louis until their noses almost touched, and tapping him on the shoulder, "you don't take this business seriously enough. You see, to recognize me as a member of a noble family would very much assist me in that other plan of marriage. How would it suit you if I were to adopt you legally as my nephew, according to the custom so

common in our country, and settle upon you, say, three hundred thousand francs?"

Scarcely were the words out of Monsieur de Latour's mouth when Louis rushed upon him, squeezed him so hard that his ribs seemed likely to break, and covered the top of his bald head with kisses.

"Come, come," cried Monsieur de Latour, struggling breathlessly against this overwhelming demonstration, "this is too much! You will strangle me!"

Louis, at this, released his hold, and seizing the old gentleman's umbrella and hat, covered them with kisses, murmuring:

"Three hundred thousand francs—dear, dear uncle!"

Then, suddenly dropping them, he said:

"No, it cannot be true. My dear sir, you must be either drunk or crazy."

"No, I am not," answered Monsieur de Latour, laughing. "It is worth three hundred thousand francs to me to have the notice put in the Brionville newspaper that I am visiting my relative at the Chateau of Montplasir, and to put the de Latour crest on my carriage without being arrested for it."

"You may have it tattooed on your body if you like," replied Louis joyfully. "Three hundred thousand francs! If I did not think it a base return for your splendid offer, I should insist that you should take possession of this old rattletrap."

"Well," said Monsieur de Latour, "I am a man of business as well as a descendant of a great feudal family, so I will wish to settle this matter of adoption upon a proper basis. You know, of course, that under our laws it is a very serious thing. It implies a degree of legal responsibility which, I am afraid, my young friend, you scarcely appreciate. You see, I have had to do with large affairs, and I know what the legal obligation means. If I adopt you as my nephew I should acquire over you all the authority of a parent. You could not marry without first asking my consent, for example."

"Yes, I know, I know. Three hundred thousand francs! Dear, dear uncle!"—and Louis again made demonstrations toward embracing Monsieur de Latour, which the old gentleman cleverly warded off with his umbrella.

"So now you understand fully the legal obligations of adoption under the French law?"

"Oh, yes, I believe you own me, body and soul. I shall not only have to ask your consent before I can get married, but before I get shaved, or even sneeze. But I am willing to risk it for three hundred thousand francs."

"Don't be afraid of that. I sha'n't attempt to coerce you in any way whatever. By the way, what is your full name?"

"Louis Victor de Latour."

"And mine," said Monsieur de Latour delightedly, "is Victor Louis de Latour."

"Why, I believe you are my uncle, after all!"

"Isn't it a lucky coincidence? Now, I will tell you what my ideas are with regard to marriage. I have a good many ideas on the subject."

"And I have only one, and that is to marry the girl I love, and through you, dear uncle—"

Here Louis made another dive at Monsieur de Latour, hugged him violently in spite of his protests, and again covered the umbrella and hat with kisses, whispering to himself:

"Dear, dear Julie!"

Monsieur de Latour, like most persons, when talking of himself was eloquent and expansive. He squared himself off, putting his thumbs in his armholes, and said solemnly:

"The catastrophe will begin."

But the rickety chair, giving way under his weight, suddenly collapsed, and in another second he was sprawling upon the floor. Louis helped him up, dusted his coat, and giving him the only remaining chair, himself took a seat upon the table.

"Rather awkward, that," said Monsieur de Latour, rubbing his head. "You must get some better chairs out

of your three hundred thousand francs. Well, when I was in the house of Chéri I fell very much in love with Mademoiselle Sélina Chéri, but she was then far above me, and remained so for twenty years. She is still unmarried, and a pretty woman yet, although no longer young, and a good one, too, and until I got this noble family bee in my bonnet I strongly desired to marry Mademoiselle Sélina. But it seems to me now that we have had quite enough of soap-boiling in the de Latour family, and I might look higher. There is a Comtesse de Beauregard, for example."

At that Louis's heart jumped into his throat and remained there, thumping, while Monsieur de Latour continued:

"You may be surprised that a man of my position should have any connection with a lady of Madame de Beauregard's rank, but it happened in this way. Her brother, the Vicomte de Brésac, honored me with his friendship, and when he died he left me as guardian of the property of his daughter Julie."

At this the room began to whirl around before Louis's misty eyes, and he heard, as in a dream, old de Latour's voice continuing:

"Madame de Beauregard has charge of the young lady herself, and, in fact, I have never seen my ward, but I have seen the old aunt. Great heavens, what a woman! She is a woman of sixty who thinks she is twenty, and acts accordingly. When that old lady is awake the devil sleeps because he knows that all of his business is being well attended to. I don't know what sort of pranks she may lead my ward into, but I am not responsible for anything except for Julie's money, which is considerable. Madame de Beauregard has one of those châteaux which carry a title with them, and if I marry her I should become a comte. That's a great temptation, you know; that is, if I could murder the old lady immediately after the ceremony. But, seriously, it would be an immense triumph at Brionville to marry the

Vicomte de Brésac's sister, and it would serve Sélina Chéri right for not having married me in all these years. But I am not yet determined. Sometimes I think I should like to marry a pretty young girl, but then people would call me an old fool. The subject of marriage is always full of doubts."

"Quite so," answered Louis mechanically.

His mind had wandered to Julie and those sunny days in Algiers when, with his heart full of love and his pockets quite empty of money, he adored her and received those secret sweet assurances which a woman can always give the man she loves.

"Well," said Monsieur de Latour, continuing to talk upon the subject most agreeable to him in the world—that is, himself—"a curious thing has just happened to me with regard to Mademoiselle Chéri. I have a young niece, Mélanie Dupont, who has lived with me for several years. We were starting for Dinard for a month when her companion, a worthy, respectable person, was taken ill and could not come. Mélanie found out that Mademoiselle Chéri was coming to Dinard, and as the two are great friends she persuaded me to let her come with Mademoiselle Chéri. Mélanie, you must know, is always begging me to marry Mademoiselle Chéri and begging Mademoiselle Chéri to marry me. At all events, I agreed to this arrangement, and they are now at a villa in the town and very happy to be together. But, of course, this is a merely temporary arrangement, and I have put an advertisement in the newspapers for a chaperon for my niece. It would seem a good scheme for you and Mélanie to make a match, but, unfortunately, the girl has become attached to Eugène de Contiac, the nephew of the Comtesse de Beauregard."

Louis, feeling himself called upon to make some remark, although his wits were still wool-gathering, said:

"Such a match as that for your niece I should think would satisfy your ambition."

Monsieur de Latour shook his head dolefully.

"The only trouble is that Eugène has not a sou of his own. He is naturally pious, reserved and strictly correct in his conduct, and my niece is of the same character. But Madame de Beauregard is determined to make him the wildest rake in France and drives him into dissipations to make a man of him, as she says. As soon as he engages in an escapade the old lady makes a will leaving him half a million francs, and my niece, who is quite disinterested, and, as I said, very religious, immediately jilts him. Then Eugène is conscience-stricken at his behavior, turns pious again, is received back into my niece's affections, and is promptly disinherited in another will by Madame de Beauregard. That old woman actually carries an advocate in her suite for the purpose of making and destroying wills. It is a very difficult problem for me, because at one time Eugène is a very desirable parti, and then my niece won't look at him, and then he hasn't a sou in the world and my niece insists she will marry him. Love and life are great puzzles."

"You will never get up a character for originality on that observation," answered Louis, his mind still full of Julie. "And so you have never seen your ward?" he said presently.

"Never. Luckily I have no responsibility for her, only her fortune. But I have seen Madame de Beauregard, and I have been balancing in my mind for the last year whether I shall marry her or Mademoiselle Cheri. You see"—here Monsieur de Latour assumed a coquettish air—"I can marry whom I please."

"I suppose you mean by that," said Louis, "that you could marry fifty or sixty ladies at once, but that would hardly seem to me to be desirable, if possible."

Monsieur de Latour let this sarcasm pass unnoticed, and then said:

"By the way, the old lady is at Dinard now, I see by the papers."

"Is Mademoiselle de Brésac with her?" asked Louis.

"I do not know. Her name is not mentioned," replied Monsieur de Latour. "Well, now that we have come to terms, we had better arrange to have the matter of adoption put in legal form as soon as possible. I think it can all be settled in a few days. Don't let anybody frighten you about the liberty you will surrender in becoming legally my nephew."

"Nobody in the world can frighten me from accepting three hundred thousand francs," answered Louis determinedly, the vision of Julie before his eyes—Julie, with her pretty head upon his shoulder, his arm around her waist, and all those sweet fantasies which haunt lovers.

"And of course you were not in earnest about burning the chateau down. We shall have to come to some arrangement about this, too, because it will add very much to my consequence to have this place in existence. True, it would require a fortune to rehabilitate it, but we might have a new roof and all the windows put in and rebuild one wing. Then, if you should marry a fortune, you might repair the whole building, or I might. Soap-boiling is exceedingly profitable, if you know what to put in the soap."

"You or anybody else are at liberty to repair this old barrack," answered Louis, his mind still on Julie.

Then old de Latour rose to take his departure, saying affectionately:

"Adieu, my dear nephew."

Louis's reply to this was to seize Monsieur de Latour in his arms and give him a bear hug which nearly cracked his ribs and drove the breath out of his body.

"Good heavens!" cried the old gentleman, fighting off Louis's frantic demonstrations to kiss him, "I can't stand this sort of thing."

"But you must," answered Louis rapturously. "How can I restrain my transports in the presence of a man who has promised to give me three hundred thousand francs to repair this old barrack and to make me his nephew? It must be a part of the agreement that I am to embrace and

kiss you at least three times a day—nothing less will content me."

"And I," panted Monsieur de Latour, retreating toward the door, "must protect myself from these vigorous demonstrations. Once a day ought to suffice you."

"No, no!" cried Louis, pursuing him to the door, which Monsieur de Latour opened precipitately, nearly knocking down old Suzette, who was listening at the keyhole. Monsieur de Latour, taking advantage of this diversion, waddled rapidly down the corridor, calling out:

"Another such hug as that will cost you at least one hundred thousand francs! I shall be here at ten o'clock tomorrow morning for our interview."

And he disappeared, while Louis, seizing old Suzette in his arms, much to that worthy woman's astonishment, began to waltz up and down the salon, shouting at the top of his voice:

"Julie, Julie, Julie!"

II

Louis, having hugged and kissed old Suzette in the most rapturous manner for fully ten minutes, retired to the salon — ironically called the grand salon — and began to pace up and down, showing his joy in every motion of his graceful figure and every expression of his handsome and vivacious countenance. His heart and mind were full of Julie, and as he murmured her name to himself, the rain stopped, the clouds parted softly and swiftly, and a flood of sunlight burst into the room.

"Julie, perhaps, is at Dinard," he kept repeating to himself until he actually persuaded himself that she must be there.

Then looking at his watch and seeing that it was after twelve o'clock, he determined to hunt up Madame de Beauregard. He rushed to the barrack which he occupied as a bedroom, and made a toilet suitable for calling upon ladies in the morning—his one white flannel suit, his one pair of black

silk stockings, his one pair of sound boots, and a new straw hat with a black ribbon around it. He surveyed himself in the glass with the anxiety of a man desirous to please, but in truth he need have given himself small concern on that score, because he had that combination of good looks, good manners, good temper and ineffable impudence which is always irresistible to women.

He did not know where the Comtesse de Beauregard was staying in the town, but that was easily to be ascertained. Wherever Madame de Beauregard went she always made a commotion. She carried with her a retinue, not of dogs, cats and birds, such as ladies of her age are apt to affect, but of human beings, mostly men.

Louis, walking rapidly through the sunny streets of the town, gay with the morning gaiety of Dinard, bought a newspaper at the first kiosk he found, and in the list of arrivals at one of the most fashionable hotels found Madame de Beauregard, with two maids and a courier, Monsieur Eugène de Contiac, and Monsieur Bertoux, advocate. Louis's joy was slightly dashed at the absence of Julie's name, and he was walking disconsolately enough along the shady street when he suddenly ran almost into the arms of Madame de Beauregard. And there, standing a little way off, smiling, blushing and dimpling, was Julie. She was radiant, all in white except a splendid red rose which bloomed upon her breast.

The Comtesse de Beauregard, who would never see sixty again, small, elegant, with a laughing devil in her eye, but with a countenance not devoid of good nature, was dressed in a costume which matched Julie's exactly, red rose and all. A sailor hat was tipped back upon her elaborately frizzed white hair, for the old lady scorned disguise in any form, and wore frankly, without any make-up, the costumes which would have suited a chit of sixteen. Her short white skirt showed her little feet encased in the most daring of embroidered red silk stockings, which she evidently

wore to be seen. She carried a dainty white parasol in her hand, and playfully prodding Louis in the ribs, cried:

"Here is our young cavalier from Algiers. Naughty boy! Why didn't you let me know that you were here? Men are so scarce nowadays, and hard to catch." And she tweaked Louis's left ear playfully.

Louis, his eyes still on Julie and his hat in his hand, murmured:

"I only found out an hour ago that you, madame, were here, and I was on my way to your hotel to call upon you."

"I dare say you are telling the truth," answered the old lady, twirling her parasol around her head gaily. "The men of the present day haven't spirit enough to tell a good, robust lie. In my day it was the fashion for gentlemen to tell great big lies to ladies, but the whole sex has reformed now almost past endurance. By the way, I understand you have inherited a fine, big chateau close by."

Julie, meanwhile, had opened her mouth several times to speak, but in vain. It was always difficult for other women to be heard when Madame de Beauregard was present.

"Fine! No, madame. I am thinking of changing the name from the Chateau of Montplasir to the Chateau of Monmisère, or calling it the chateau of rats and mice, or something of the sort. But it is big!"

"And have you seen or heard anything of a grotesque old party of your name, a soap-boiler by trade, who is extremely anxious to be considered a member of your family?" asked the old lady.

Julie's mouth was opened for the fourth time to speak, but, as usual, Madame de Beauregard gave her not the ghost of a chance to be heard.

"He came to see me this morning," replied Louis.

"You are indebted to me for that," cried Madame de Beauregard. "You know he is as rich as Aladdin, and quite respectable. If he were not so tediously correct in his conduct, and of

such tiresome propriety, I think I should marry him for his money. You know he was a friend of Julie's father, my brother, who made him trustee of her fortune, and as I have charge of Julie I have met Monsieur de Latour several times. I told him about you, and put the notion into his head of establishing some sort of relationship with you. When we were in Algiers you made a very favorable impression upon me. I really believe you capable of mischief, unlike that poor rag of a man, my nephew, Eugène de Contiac. He is in love, you know, with old de Latour's niece Mélanie, who is twice as pious as Eugène. To think that I should not only have a pious man in my family, but should run the risk of the type being perpetuated! But my family were born to ill luck."

"I am a thousand times obliged to you," said Louis, his eyes glued on Julie, who made a desperate effort to speak, but was cut short promptly by Madame de Beauregard.

"Now we have the finest joke in the world afoot to play off on old de Latour. He is advertising in the newspapers for a companion for that niece of his, and I put it into Julie's head to try to get the place. Old de Latour has never seen her, you know. What larks we shall have when we get Julie established as Mélanie's companion. She will have strict orders from me to get some of the piety and propriety out of that girl, because I don't want any piety or propriety in my family. I have too much already."

Louis felt like disputing this proposition, and Julie again opened her lips to speak, but, as usual, it was in vain.

"So now," cried the old lady, "you may look out for some amusement! I intend to have a gay time at Dinard. General Granier is here, you know, and a few men. I don't call every biped wearing trousers a man, if you please. It is only those with life and spirit in them that I think deserve the name. Come, Julie, it is time for our lesson in skirt-dancing."

As the old lady, seizing Julie, skipped

off, Julie turned her head and managed to articulate one sentence only, and this was:

"Good morning, monsieur."

Louis stood still and swore silently at Madame de Beauregard, but he was happy, after all, for Julie was there. And then, what delicious possibilities of seeing her were involved in that ridiculous practical joke which Madame de Beauregard proposed to play on Monsieur de Latour.

With these thoughts animating him he determined to carry out his original intention and leave cards on the ladies at their hotel. This he did, feeling as if he were walking on air. Then he strolled about the town for an hour or two, and presently, led by his good genius, he went down to the beach, where the sea was like molten gold under the summer sky. The first object that met his eye among the crowd of bathers was Madame de Beauregard, in a bright red bathing suit, disporting herself like a mermaid in the waves. And oh, joy and rapture, a little way off stood Julie! Louis flew toward her and received a welcome from her eyes.

"Mademoiselle," he whispered, "do you know what my first thought was when I inherited the Chateau of Montplasir?"

It was one of those questions which require no answer. Julie, whose eyes were usually dancing with merriment and as fearless as a child's, lowered her long lashes, but in a moment she raised her eyes and said:

"Was it of me you were thinking, monsieur?"

"Yes, yes, yes, mademoiselle! And Monsieur de Latour has offered to adopt me as his nephew and give me three hundred thousand francs if I will recognize him as the head of the younger branch of the family. Oh, Julie, dearest!"

At that moment Madame de Beauregard, in her red bathing suit, came rushing out of the water and dashing up to Louis, shrieked:

"Come, now, take off your clothes and come right into the water with me,

and I will show you how to turn a somersault."

Louis fled, hotly pursued for a short distance by the old lady; but years and wind told, and Madame de Beauregard had to return to the sea, keeping her eyes open for a young man more *complaisant* than Louis. But Julie walked up and down the sand in the blazing sunlight, listening to the quick beating of her own heart which was flooded with the sunshine of life and love.

The fine weather continued during the afternoon, and the August sun, shining out brilliantly, drove the silvery mists oceanward, turned the sea and shore into a splendor of blue and gold, and made a glory of the fields and woods about the merry little town.

All the world was out of doors, including Monsieur de Latour, Mademoiselle Cheri and Mélanie, who were having tea in the garden of the Villa Rose—a garden-like paradise. Mademoiselle Cheri was a comely woman, although past middle age, but in her somewhat plain face was the charm and repose of a sweet nature. But Mademoiselle Cheri had remarkable good sense mixed with her sweetness, and by no means shared all of her ex-lover's projects and ambitions. Mélanie, on the contrary, pretty, pious and trustful, thought her uncle the wisest of men.

Monsieur de Latour, being unable to keep the cat in the bag, let it escape before he had finished his first cup of tea. He began by announcing with a lofty air to Mademoiselle Cheri that he had spent the morning making the acquaintance of his relative, the head of the house of de Latour, at his Chateau of Montplasir, and described with perfect truth the rapturous greeting he had received from his new-found relative. He did not, however, mention the three hundred thousand francs. He said that he had arranged to meet Louis the next morning, in order to trace up their exact relationship. "I," he said pompously, "being the head of the younger branch of the family."

At this Mademoiselle Cheri sniffed, if so pleasant a creature could be said to sniff.

"How much, monsieur," she asked sweetly, "did you pay for your place on the family tree?"

Monsieur de Latour scowled. Mademoiselle Cheri was treating him exactly as if he were still a clerk in the soap-boiling factory of Cheri & Compagnie, and he suspected that she already considered him her own matrimonial prize and hence took liberties beforehand.

"Nothing whatever, mademoiselle," he answered stiffly.

And then, determined to impress Mademoiselle Cheri with a sense of his own dignity, he added:

"My connection with my new relative is likely to become closer, because we were so mutually pleased with each other that we have agreed to assume early the status of uncle and nephew—a common enough arrangement in France, which could be well imitated in other countries."

"That must have cost you a good many francs," said Mademoiselle Cheri coolly.

"Only three hundred thousand," tartly responded Monsieur de Latour, determined to let Mademoiselle Cheri know that three hundred thousand francs were a mere bagatelle with him.

Even Mélanie started at this, and said:

"Oh, uncle!"

But Mademoiselle Cheri showed not the least surprise, merely saying:

"I thought that, in your craze for family consequence and a crest on your carriage, you would do something of the kind."

"A great many people would if they could," answered Monsieur de Latour. "Give me another cup of tea, Mélanie."

"A great many more would not," replied Mademoiselle Cheri; "I, for example. My father was an honest, respectable soap-boiler, well thought of by all who knew him—a good father, a good friend, a good citizen. That is enough for me. I would not

pay sixty francs to be related to the greatest family in France."

Here Mélanie, seeing that her uncle and friend were fast approaching a quarrel, interposed by taking a letter out of her pocket.

"This letter is, I think, an answer to our advertisement."

Monsieur de Latour opened the letter. It bore, in the fine stationery and elegant, if somewhat illegible, handwriting, all the evidences of refinement. The advertisement, which read as follows, was pinned to it:

WANTED—A companion for a young lady of good family. Must be well educated, a musician and linguist, and of unexceptionable family. Apply by letter to MONSIEUR VICTOR LOUIS DE LATOUR, POSTE RESTANTE.

Monsieur de Latour, with some difficulty, read the letter, which was as follows:

Mademoiselle Julie de Courcey offers her services as companion in answer to the above advertisement. She can furnish unexceptionable references as to her acquirements and associations, and will be pleased to meet any appointment for a personal interview.

The name de Courcey made a great impression on Monsieur de Latour, to whom names and titles were important things.

"Now, I like that letter," he said. "It's very businesslike. It is evidently written by a mature and experienced woman. That is shown in her letter—nothing superfluous, a plain statement of fact and desires an interview. Mélanie, my love, you may write in my name and suggest an appointment at this villa at five o'clock tomorrow afternoon. Of course, mademoiselle," he said, turning to Mademoiselle Cheri, "I appreciate more than I can express your kindness to Mélanie, and as long as you will allow her to remain with you she will, I know, be most happy to do so. I shall feel most grateful to you, but I do not wish to impose upon you. If this lady is all that she appears to be, I could engage her on trial and establish her in this villa, so that I could have the benefit of your judgment upon her qualifications."

Monsieur de Latour said this much,

for after all he had a soft spot in his heart for Mademoiselle Chéri. He could not forget when he had been a clerk in her father's factory and pretty Sélène Chéri had been the star of his existence; but that was before he became the prospective uncle of the head of the house of de Latour.

"Certainly. I think the arrangement an admirable one," replied Mademoiselle Chéri; "and, by the way, monsieur, do you know that your friend the Comtesse de Beauregard is at Dinard? I saw her going into her hotel this morning. She had her whole retinué with her. There was our poor, dear Eugène"—for Mademoiselle Chéri was in the confidence of the lovers—"her advocate and man of business, Monsieur Bertoux, two valets and three maids."

There was not a suspicion of jealousy in Mademoiselle Chéri's voice as she said this, which very much annoyed Monsieur de Latour. He therefore smiled significantly.

"Oh," he said, "I fancied Madame de Beauregard would turn up at Dinard about this time. In my last communication to her concerning her niece I mentioned that I would be at Dinard for the month of August."

"And you think she came here to see you?" asked Mademoiselle Chéri, with a suspicious innocence.

"Oh, no, no, no, I never said that! But she is a very fascinating woman, and the man who marries her will get an ancestral seat which carries with it a title."

"I think," responded Mademoiselle Chéri calmly, "that you have one ancestral seat too many now."

Meanwhile Mélanie, at the mention of Eugène, leaned her head pensively on her hand. Two tears gathered in her pretty blue eyes and dropped down upon her cheek. She had not seen Eugène de Contiac for months, nor had she heard from him, and by his appearing at Dinard with his aunt, Mélanie knew well enough that he was leading a gay life, and a gay life modeled upon Madame de Beauregard's pattern was terrifying to the pious and innocent Mélanie.

"I think," said Monsieur de Latour, after finishing his second cup of tea, "that I shall call to see Madame de Beauregard this afternoon," and then, answering the unspoken wish in Mélanie's face, he added:

"I shall also inquire about our friend, Eugène de Contiac."

"I wonder," said Mademoiselle Chéri, "why that dreadful old scapegrace, Madame de Beauregard—"

Here Monsieur de Latour gave such a start that he almost upset his cup of tea. The idea of speaking of so great a personage as Madame de Beauregard as "that dreadful old scapegrace" electrified him. But Mademoiselle Chéri calmly repeated the words.

"—dreadful old scapegrace, I say, should wish to make so correct and prudent a young man as Eugène de Contiac into a rake as wild as herself. It is more than I can understand."

Monsieur de Latour fell back into his garden chair. A comtesse of one of the greatest families in France being called a rake! But, he reflected, jealousy was at the bottom of all of Mademoiselle Chéri's remarks, and the notion so tickled him that he grew quite gay under it and beamed on Mademoiselle Chéri, whom he supposed to be cherishing an ardent passion for himself. By way of increasing her anguish, however, he rose and said:

"I think I may as well go and make my call now upon Madame de Beauregard. It is a very good visiting hour."

"Do," replied Mademoiselle Chéri, helping herself to bread and butter, "and say to Eugène de Contiac that I shall be happy if he will call to see me. There is a man who is as well born as any in France, but quite democratic, and has always paid me as many kind attentions as if I were the youngest and prettiest girl of his acquaintance and the daughter of a duke instead of a respectable soap-boiler."

Monsieur de Latour flung out of the garden. He decided that Mademoiselle Chéri was getting old—there was no doubt about that—and when people grew old they grew cranky. He re-

garded himself, however, as steadily getting younger, and began to be disturbed, in the event that Madame de Beauregard should marry him, whether the fact that they were exactly the same age, sixty years, might not be against him.

Monsieur de Latour walked along the grand promenade, full of elegant-looking women and well-dressed men in the August afternoon, sitting at tables, chatting, drinking tea and eating ices, the blue air vibrant with music from the band, and all with that pleasurable excitement which seems to belong to Dinard. It occurred to him that he might find Madame de Beauregard among the crowd of pleasure-seekers.

He did not, however, see her until a well-directed chocolate bonbon hit him in the back. He turned around, and there at a table sat Madame de Beauregard, Eugène de Contiac and a small, sunburned military man, whom Monsieur de Latour recognized at once as General Granier, who had been a lady-killer fifty years before at the republican court of Louis Napoleon. He was elaborately and very youthfully dressed, and wore an orchid in his buttonhole. It occurred to Monsieur de Latour that the old general and Madame de Beauregard matched each other as well as the Dresden figures of Daphnis, the shepherd, and Chloe, the shepherdess. But there was nothing rural about either of them, especially Madame de Beauregard. She was much nearer Chloe's age than Monsieur de Latour; that is, if she could be said to be of any age, for the brightness of her eye, the quickness of her hand, the overflowing vitality which bubbled all over her, were more like sixteen than sixty.

She was evidently in the midst of a roaring flirtation with the general, at which their remarks were so free that poor Eugène de Contiac, by nature as pious and modest as a girl, sat and hung his head in embarrassment. He was neat, precise, clean-shaven and not ill-looking, but persons not so gay even as Madame de Beauregard might

have seen in him a slight superfluity of goodness and correctness.

Monsieur de Latour, taking the chocolate bonbons thrown at him as an invitation, advanced, and Madame de Beauregard greeted him rapturously. Eugène de Contiac, thinking this a good moment to escape from bad company, promptly offered Monsieur de Latour his chair and was sneaking off, but was caught by Madame de Beauregard and dragged back by his coattails.

"Oh, you delicious old soap-boiler!" she cried to Monsieur de Latour, holding on meanwhile with one hand to Eugène de Contiac, "I am so glad to see you. Now, Eugène, sit down. Monsieur de Latour will fetch himself a chair"—which he promptly did—"and try to learn something from the conversation of two such men as General Granier and Monsieur de Latour, who, I dare say, only wants a chance to kick up his heels with the rest of us at Dinard. You see," cried this terrible old lady, whisking herself into an attitude by which she thoroughly displayed her small and pretty feet in a pair of silk stockings more daring than those she had worn in the morning, and flouncing out her skirts so as to show a wonderful lace and chiffon petticoat, "you see, Eugène still has pious inclinations. I can't get that out of him, but if he ever becomes permanently pious and correct he sha'n't have a franc of my money, and he knows it. I like a man with life in him, like you, General Granier, and you, my rural friend." And at this she actually pinched Monsieur de Latour on the arm in full sight of a thousand persons.

But to be pinched publicly by a comtesse of one of the greatest families in France was an honor that flooded Monsieur de Latour's soul with joy.

"And may I inquire, madame, after your health since I had the pleasure of seeing you last?" asked Monsieur de Latour.

"Perfect, thank you," replied the old lady. "My back is not a day over twenty-five, my head is about fifteen,

and as for my le— What are you winking and blinking at me for, Eugène?" she snapped, turning around on that unfortunate young man.

Monsieur de Latour, apprehending what Madame de Beauregard meant to say, hastened to interrupt.

"And Mademoiselle de Brésac, whom I reckon it a privilege to call my ward?"

"Oh, she's in the country," Madame de Beauregard answered, again falling foul of the luckless Eugène. "This fellow has been doing rather better in the last few months. He has been tipsy three or four times, has been going to some of the gayest places in Paris and has given up reading Bossuet's sermons. I thought I should never cure him of that abominable habit of sermon-reading, but the last time I caught him at it I cut down his allowance five hundred francs the month, and it acted like a charm. Money is a great persuader. I brought him down here for the benefit of General Granier's society, who has promised to teach him a few things; and, as neither one of them returned to the hotel until two o'clock this morning, I am in hopes that Eugène is reforming."

Eugène, with a hangdog countenance, listened to all of this with a dreadful apprehension that every word would be repeated to Mélanie.

"But I had a very difficult time of it," put in General Granier. "I took him to the theatre, and I almost had to drag him behind the scenes, and when one of the coryphées made at him and was about to kiss him, he ran for his life, and much too fast for a man with an artificial leg, like I have, to catch him."

Madame de Beauregard turned around on Eugène.

"And is that the way you see life?" she cried indignantly. "Well, I always said I was the only man in the family. All of my brothers and nephews are like boarding-school misses. My husband, poor man, was entirely too good for this world."

"Not a gay dog in the lot except

yourself," impudently remarked General Granier, and was rewarded by a kiss airily blown at him from Madame de Beauregard's little withered hands.

Monsieur de Latour, although somewhat frightened, enjoyed this extremely. It was a great deal more lively than drinking tea in the garden with Mademoiselle Cheri and Mélanie.

"I don't see," he said, "why our young friend objects to dancing the quadrille of life to a lively air. Perhaps I can assist you, madame, in educating him."

Poor Eugène shuddered.

"I shall be a million times obliged to you, my dear man," promptly replied Madame de Beauregard, pulling up her skirt higher and showing so much of her chiffon petticoat that Monsieur de Latour was seriously alarmed. "But I know what ails Eugène. He is in love with your niece—charming girl, and I should not have the least objection to her if she would only be as gay as I am. But she won't, and won't let Eugène be. So I have told him frankly—for I am a very frank person, as you know—that he may have Mélanie and be pious and not get a single sou from me, or he can be a man, as I reckon men to be, and I will leave him five hundred thousand francs. No proposition could be fairer."

"I wish I could get five hundred thousand francs on the same terms," remarked the old general, with a couple of winks.

"Oh, I should not have the slightest trouble with you," replied Madame de Beauregard gaily.

"Really, it seems to me," said Monsieur de Latour, jealous of the attentions which the general was receiving, "it would be easy enough for anybody. I always liked a gay life myself, and I could tell you some of my experiences, madame"—here old de Latour assumed a mysterious air—"which I am afraid would frighten you very much."

"Then pray go on," cried this terrible old lady, "and tell us the worst."

But Monsieur de Latour, whose experiences were really exceedingly mild,

felt ashamed to speak of them before two such accomplished rakes as Madame de Beauregard and General Granier. They were, however, a pair of merry old grigs, but Monsieur de Latour felt, as well as saw, that Madame de Beauregard, for all her kittenishness, was really a very great lady and not without kindness of heart.

Poor Eugène sat, the image of woe, his countenance lighted up by an occasional sickly grin at a daring sally of Madame de Beauregard, to which General Granier promptly responded in kind, and which Monsieur de Latour vainly endeavored to surpass. He hit upon a lucky subject, however. Madame de Beauregard speaking of her possible intention to buy a villa at Dinard, he mentioned, with a magniloquent air, his recently acquired relationship to Louis Victor de Latour, of the Chateau of Montplasir.

"I think I know that young man," cried Madame de Beauregard. "A delightful young scamp, as impudent as they make them. He came near kissing me at Algiers, a couple of years ago. Now, Monsieur de Latour, I think it would be a good idea for you to repair and refurnish the Chateau of Montplasir. Oh, what a name! What pleasure we could have there!"

This plan, recommended by a woman of Madame de Beauregard's rank and fortune, immediately appeared highly desirable to Monsieur de Latour.

"It would be quite possible," he said, meditating, "to patch up the roof of the best wing, put in windows, and get some furniture into the place in a week or two. Money can annihilate time and distance."

"Then do it," cried Madame de Beauregard, pinching his ear, to the delight of the passers-by, who reckoned Madame de Beauregard as among the peep-shows of Dinard.

"And if I can make the place habitable, you will probably do me and my kinsman the honor of becoming our guests?" Monsieur de Latour said grandly. "And may I also count upon the presence of Mademoiselle de Brésac?

By the way, is she in the neighborhood of Dinard?"

"Oh, yes," answered Madame de Beauregard, suddenly becoming interested in poor Eugène de Contiac's hair. "She is staying at a convent at Saint Malo. Eugène, why do you wear your hair plastered down in that sanctimonious manner?"

"But I thought you said Mademoiselle de Brésac was in the country?" inquired Monsieur de Latour, anxious to establish his association with such great people as the de Brésacs and de Beauregards.

"So she is! so she is! The next thing, Eugène, you will be taken for an English clergyman, and I shall be forever disgraced. I have had a great many milk-sops in my family, but so far I have been spared a clergyman."

The party remained together a half-hour longer, and consumed several ices and much liqueur before they rose from the table, and Madame de Beauregard made a triumphal circuit of the grand promenade, with Monsieur de Latour on one side of her and General Granier on the other, while poor Eugène, with a cannon's load of wraps, parasol, fan, books and other impedimenta, brought up the rear. For a man with an artificial leg, General Granier walked remarkably well, and Monsieur de Latour was electrified by Madame de Beauregard making minute inquiries as to how the chassepot rifle in his leg worked.

"Beautifully!" cried the old gentleman with enthusiasm. "I keep a record of my target and can hit the bull's-eye five times out of seven at forty paces."

Then, seeing Monsieur de Latour was completely mystified, General Granier continued, lifting up his right leg, which, apparently, was a perfectly normal right leg with correctly fitting trousers and a well-made shoe.

"Do you see that leg?" he asked critically. "The real one is buried on the field of Gravelotte, but this one is twice as good. I had it fitted with a rifle barrel and trigger here in my pocket."

The general slapped his pocket, and Monsieur de Latour then noticed, as General Granier lifted up the heel of the boot, a small round hole which was evidently the end of the rifle barrel.

"Well, every man must have his hobby, and mine is to shoot as well with my right leg as most men can do with their right hands. Come to see me some morning, monsieur, and I will give an exhibition that will make your hair stand on end."

Monsieur de Latour's hair almost stood on end at this.

"Now," cried Madame de Beauregard triumphantly, "are you surprised that I adore General Granier? Think of a man having the pluck and ingenuity to make a gun out of his leg!"

General Granier showed his appreciation of this compliment by pirouetting on his left leg, without any regard to the crowd of laughing sightseers, for he, like Madame de Beauregard, had been one of the monuments at Dinard for years.

"You see how delightfully gay we are," cried Madame de Beauregard to Monsieur de Latour, when they resumed their walk. "Now, do have that old rookery done up, and then we will all come and pay you a visit."

"I shall endeavor to do so," replied Monsieur de Latour gallantly.

The party escorted Madame de Beauregard to her hotel. Once or twice more Monsieur de Latour tried to find out something about Julie de Brésac, but as every mention of her name brought down maledictions upon poor Eugène, Monsieur de Latour abandoned the subject after Madame de Beauregard had informed him that Julie had all the life, spirit and gaiety which her cousin, Eugène de Contiac, ought to have had and didn't.

Monsieur de Latour took his way home meditating deeply. These two persons, Madame de Beauregard and General Granier, were of his age, and older than he, and yet life was full of enjoyment for them. He began to think that in the higher classes youth lasted longer. He had been reckoned

an old fogy at Brionville, and Mademoiselle Chéri had a way of assuming that he was a worthy and settled person who had no longer any right to the pleasures or the follies of youth, and this was extremely distasteful to Monsieur de Latour, who had a taste for both. He almost decided to marry Madame de Beauregard, provided, of course, that she would take him; but what man lives who entertains any serious doubt as to whether any woman will take him?

III

THE next morning, bright and early, Monsieur de Latour presented himself at the Chateau of Montplasir, where he made his proposition to Louis that he should put a large force of workmen in at once and make one wing of the old place habitable.

"For, to tell you the truth, my dear nephew," he said, "it would add immensely to my consequence to be able to date my letters from the Chateau of Montplasir, and I don't mind spending twenty or thirty thousand francs for that purpose."

"My dear, dear uncle!" was Louis's only reply, endeavoring to clasp Monsieur de Latour in his arms.

But his first embrace had been fraught with so much danger to Monsieur de Latour's ribs that the old gentleman fought him off, and Louis was reduced, as usual, to embracing the hat and umbrella.

"I could very easily telegraph to Paris for workmen," said Monsieur de Latour. "I could have fifty in here within twenty-four hours, and the materials could be had at Dinard. Fifty ought to be able to make one wing habitable certainly within a fortnight."

"My beloved uncle," answered Louis, "you may have the whole chateau repaired at your expense if you desire. No one shall call me mean in that particular."

"And as for furniture and tapestries, if an order were placed in Paris today

it could be filled within forty-eight hours."

"You are at perfect liberty to order furniture amounting to a million francs, if you like, also at your own expense, and Gobelins tapestries in any quantities you may wish. You will find me the most accommodating person in the world in these matters."

"And pictures—we must have some pictures to hide those discolored walls."

"Pray decorate them with old masters at five hundred thousand francs each, or if you prefer the moderns, buy a few Munkácsys, Corots, Détailles, or anything you like, provided they are good and very expensive. I place no limit upon you in that respect."

"Really," sarcastically answered Monsieur de Latour, "you are too good. I don't contemplate spending my whole fortune in fitting up one wing of this establishment."

"I shall put no obstacles in your way, if you do," answered Louis with the utmost amiability.

"I am afraid, young man, you don't know very much about business."

"Of course not. I am a de Latour, and if you wish to be taken for a scion of this noble house you must forget all about business—that is, as soon as you have conveyed to me the three hundred thousand francs which you have promised."

Monsieur de Latour looked solemnly at Louis and then winked his left eye.

"I am a de Latour," he said, "but I sha'n't forget all about business. Don't think that I am dipping into my principal or even hampering myself seriously in spending thirty or forty thousand francs on this chateau. It is difficult to spend much in a small provincial place like Brionville. My income has been steadily accumulating for the past twenty years, and this is my first fling."

Monsieur de Latour, however, being practical even in his follies, then proceeded to unfold his projects to Louis as they sat together at the rickety table. Plans were discussed, estimates were made, which provided for

the expenditure of a considerable sum of money, but by no means foolishly or recklessly. Monsieur de Latour accompanied Louis through each room of the wing to be repaired. He selected his own apartments, a bedroom and a study.

"Not that I am what is called a reading man," he said, "but it sounds well to have a study. I have had an office all my life until now at Brionville. I can bring my servants on from Brionville and get others here."

All the time Louis had been asking subtle questions meant to discover how much Monsieur de Latour knew or would tell about Julie de Brésac, but without success, until Monsieur de Latour, returning to the grand salon, squared himself off and said in a magniloquent manner:

"My object in hurrying things up is that I may entertain as my guests the Comtesse de Beauregard and her niece, of whom I spoke, Mademoiselle de Brésac, and General Granier. You see, my young friend, I am not without grand acquaintances."

"Of course not," said Louis. "You have known me since yesterday."

"I mean other than yourself."

"And what did you say was the name of Madame de Beauregard's niece—Mademoiselle de Marsac?" asked Louis artlessly, meaning to throw Monsieur de Latour off the scent.

"De Brésac. She is in the country or in a convent. I don't know which. I could not get anything concerning her out of Madame de Beauregard, and it seemed to exasperate her every time I asked about Julie."

Louis walked to the window.

"But she is coming to the chateau, is she not?" he asked, turning around.

"Oh, yes. She is young and pretty, I understand, and I like youth and beauty. The fact is, I have not yet made up my mind whether I shall marry youth and beauty, age and rank, or"—remembering Sélène Chéri—"middle age and merit."

"I know which I shall marry," answered Louis stoutly. "Youth and

beauty, love and rapture, smiles and kisses."

Monsieur de Latour then rose to go.

"I hope, my dear nephew-to-be," he said, smiling, "that you will call upon my niece, Mademoiselle Mélanie Dupont, who is shortly to become your cousin. But although she has youth and beauty already, and kisses and rapture in store, they are not for you, but for that very piously inclined nephew of Madame de Beauregard, of whom I spoke—Eugène de Contiac. I am afraid you would be too gay for my niece. She is, as I mentioned, staying under the charge of Mademoiselle Chéri, my old friend, at the Villa Rose. But don't go to kissing and embracing them as you do me."

"But neither of them contemplates giving me three hundred thousand francs," interrupted Louis. "I insist that it shall be made a part of our agreement that I shall be permitted to embrace you at least three times a day. You can get your life insured, you know. I shall do myself the honor and pleasure of calling upon Mademoiselle Chéri and my cousin, Mademoiselle Mélanie, whom I shall be proud to acknowledge as a relative, this very afternoon."

The arrangements took up all of the forenoon and much of the afternoon, and instead of appearing at the Villa Rose punctually at five o'clock for tea, as was his habit, Monsieur de Latour was, at that time, in the telegraph office sending and receiving despatches concerning work on the Chateau of Montplasir.

But meanwhile Louis de Latour appeared at the villa to pay his respects to the ladies, quite unconscious of a strange and fortuitous meeting which was ahead of him.

A little before five o'clock Louis rang the bell of the villa, and was ushered through into a beautiful garden at the back where, at their tea-table in a little grassy place almost surrounded by ancient rose trees in the last blooming of summer, Mademoiselle Chéri and Mélanie received their guests in the afternoons. The

air was soft and fragrant with the late blown roses, and the sunlight in unclouded splendor lay over land and sea. As Louis walked along the shady garden path to where the tea-table sat, the graceful figure of a girl, dressed modestly in black, was preceding him through the mazes of the shrubbery. One look sufficed. It was Julie de Brésac. Louis felt a shock of delight, rushed after her, and they met, unseen by other eyes, in a sweet and odorous solitude formed by a circle of rose trees. Louis seized Julie's hand, and she turned on him two sweet, dark eyes and a charming face all dimpling with smiles. There was pure delight in her glance.

"I did not expect to meet you here," she said, seating herself on a garden chair and arranging her black draperies around her.

"And I did not expect to meet you here, mademoiselle," answered Louis in rapture. "I suppose you have come, as I have, to call upon Mademoiselle Chéri and Mademoiselle Dupont, the niece of my benefactor. Oh, mademoiselle, what a budget I have to unpack for you."

"That will keep," replied Julie hurriedly, raising her hand in a warning gesture. "But you are not to know that I am here nor to recognize me in the least, until we are introduced."

What madcap prank had Julie now in her pretty head? thought Louis; for Julie was a madcap and given to pranks, and those which did not come into her head Madame de Beauregard was tolerably certain to put there, and this Louis expressed in guarded language. Suddenly it flashed upon him, the escapade which Julie proposed entering upon with Monsieur de Latour, and Julie herself confirmed this by whispering to him, as she opened her dainty black parasol so as to conceal her laughing face:

"You know, I have never seen Monsieur de Latour, who is the trustee of my property, but I happen to know that he has arrived at Dinard with his niece Mélanie, and my cousin Eugène adores that girl. I also found out

that Monsieur de Latour was advertising for a companion for Mélanie; so it came into my head and that of my aunt that I would take a look at my trustee without telling him who I am. So I have replied to the advertisement, and I am here today to be inspected for the position of companion."

Julie said this with a dangerous demureness. Louis had discovered, in those radiant days at Algiers, that Julie was never perfectly serious unless she was bent on mischief.

"But, mademoiselle," he said, "although Monsieur de Latour may not have mentioned it in his advertisement, he wishes a serious and settled person as companion, or rather chaperon, for Mademoiselle Mélanie. That much I know, although I met Monsieur de Latour only yesterday morning."

"Am I not a serious and settled person?" asked Julie, tapping her little shoe with the end of her parasol. "At least am I not as serious and settled as you are?"

"Perhaps so, mademoiselle," answered Louis, smiling. "I am afraid that both of us are a little intoxicated with the new wine of life which we are drinking."

"At least," promptly replied Julie, "I am twice as serious and settled as my aunt." And at this they both laughed.

"All I ask of you," said Julie, with a sidelong glance which enforced her request, "is that you will let me play my little part undiscovered. It is no harm—how can it be? I simply want to amuse myself a little. By the way, this is my first opportunity of congratulating you upon coming into your inheritance."

"I wish it were a better inheritance," replied Louis, fixing his eyes, bright with meaning, on Julie.

These two young souls, gay, affectionate and exuberant by nature, had, from the beginning, established a perfect communication by glances and unspoken words. Julie knew Louis to be her lover, and Louis felt that the thought was far from unpleasing to Julie, and she understood perfectly

why he uttered this wish. He desired that it might be more worthy of her.

"But," he said, "I have had a great, a marvelous piece of fortune. Monsieur de Latour, you know, belongs, or thinks he belongs, to my family. Very well—I am only too happy to have an honest, hard-working soap-boiler among my relations. So Monsieur de Latour has arranged to make me a gift of three hundred thousand francs and to adopt me legally as his nephew. The papers will be prepared and will be signed as soon as ready. And then there is another glorious possibility in store for me. My heaven-sent uncle tells me that you and Madame de Beauregard may be induced to visit us at the chateau as soon as part of it can be made habitable."

"Then," replied Julie, giving him another one of those lovely sidelong glances into which she threw both archness and sentiment, "even if I don't succeed in playing this delightful trick on Monsieur de Latour, I shall at least have—the pleasure—"

Here Julie stopped, smiling and blushing, and Louis, taking up the thread, said delightedly:

"I shall have the joy of being under the same roof with you, at all events, for a little time."

Louis paused and looked about him. They were quite alone except for the presence of a pair of blue pigeons, which were cooing softly on the top of an arbor near them. Louis leaned over toward her and said one word, "Julie," and Julie, whose eyes were suddenly downcast, raised them with a look in their blue depths which Louis had seen there when he had scarcely a franc to his name. But just then voices were heard, and in a half-minute more Mademoiselle Cheri and Mélanie were seen approaching. There was no time for any further explanation. Julie, like most women of her class, was an admirable actress. As the women of good society have to appear interested when they are bored, to maintain their gravity when they are secretly amused, to regulate their antipathies and control

their emotions, they are already graduates of the best school of acting in the world. Julie at once assumed an air which Louis had never dreamed that she possessed—an air submissive and deprecatory and well adapted to the character which she assumed. Mademoiselle Cheri spoke first, in her usual kind manner.

"May I ask," she said, "if you bring us a message from Mademoiselle de Courcey, whom we are expecting at this hour?"

"I am Mademoiselle de Courcey," said Julie modestly.

Mademoiselle Cheri looked a little puzzled, glancing toward Louis, whom she had never seen and for whose presence she could not well account.

"Pardon, mademoiselle," he said, advancing, "permit me to introduce myself. I am Monsieur Louis Victor de Latour, a relative of Monsieur Victor Louis de Latour, and I believe I have the honor of claiming relationship also with this young lady." And he bowed and smiled in a pleasant manner peculiarly his own at Mélanie, who bowed and smiled in return.

There was nothing patronizing nor uppish about this young man. Nothing could be simpler or more agreeable than his manner, thought Mélanie, who had expected to find him cocky and uppish to the last degree.

"I called to pay my respects to you, mademoiselle, and to my relative, Mademoiselle Dupont; but I perceive that you have an appointment with this lady, and I will postpone my visit to a more opportune season. May I return in half an hour?"

"Certainly, monsieur," replied Mademoiselle Cheri. "I hope by that time Monsieur de Latour will be here. We expected him at five o'clock, and he is likely to arrive at any moment."

Louis bowed himself off, and then Mademoiselle Cheri, inviting Julie to be seated, said to her politely:

"I am afraid, mademoiselle, there is a mistake here. I think Monsieur de Latour desired a lady old enough to be a chaperon, as well as a companion, for his niece."

"Nothing was said about age, mademoiselle," replied Julie, "and I thought it possible that he might desire a companion rather than a chaperon."

"That is what I really desire," said Mélanie timidly. "I have no sisters, no cousins and few girl friends. I have often longed for a companion of my own age."

The two girls looked at each other with mutual liking. Nothing could be more unlike—Mélanie, nun-like in her simplicity and piety, and Julie, full of the spirit of mischief without a restraining hand to guide her. But both of them were instinctively good, tender of heart and incapable of meanness, and their very oppositeness brought them together.

"Perhaps," said Julie demurely, "Monsieur de Latour might accept me temporarily as a companion for you, mademoiselle."

"Yes," said Mélanie, clapping her hands softly, "at least while we are at Dinard. I should love to have a companion, and dear Mademoiselle Seline will chaperon us both."

The two girls continued to gaze at each other with friendly and smiling eyes. Mademoiselle Cheri, the best of women and by nature a spoiler of children, girls, men, women, servants, horses, dogs and birds, at once replied:

"If it is agreeable to Monsieur de Latour, I am more than willing to chaperon you while we are at Dinard. I love to have young life about me."

Mademoiselle Cheri gave a little sigh, and one of those visions passed softly before her eyes which haunt unmarried women of her age—a vision of the children that never were.

The two girls immediately plunged into a conversation with each other, Mademoiselle Cheri taking an occasional part, and the longer they conversed the more companionable they seemed. After waiting half an hour for Monsieur de Latour tea was served, and Mademoiselle Cheri and Mélanie succumbed still more to Julie's sweetness and sprightliness. At last, finding it impossible to wait longer, for the

alleged companion had an engagement for a very smart party given at one of the finest chateaux in the neighborhood, Julie rose to go. She left behind her a strong desire in the minds of both Mademoiselle Cheri and Mélanie to see more of her.

It was quite six o'clock before Monsieur de Latour, red and panting, turned up, bringing with him Louis, who had promised to return within half an hour, but who had carefully watched the garden waiting for Julie's departure. He had by no means the same confidence in his powers of acting that Julie had in hers. Monsieur de Latour, seating himself, demanded refreshment at once, not only in the shape of tea, but in a glass of cognac.

"For I can tell you," he said, turning to Louis, "I have had as hard a day's work as I ever did when I was in charge of the vats of your respected father, Mademoiselle Seline. But," he said, after disposing promptly of the cognac, "I have been quite successful. In ten days more, thanks to my own energy and determination and the good will of my nephew here"—at which he slapped Louis on the back—"one wing of my ancestral chateau will be habitable."

Louis agreed to every plan and even suggestion that Monsieur de Latour made, and expressed the highest gratification at everything which had been undertaken, of which he frankly acknowledged himself the beneficiary.

"And then," he said, smiling, "I shall hope to have the pleasure of seeing you, dear uncle, and my Cousin Mélanie and Mademoiselle Cheri established at the Chateau of Montplasir, to stay as long as you like."

Monsieur de Latour was delighted at this, and went on to explain the various orders he had given. Mélanie attempted once or twice to bring up the subject of the companion, but Monsieur de Latour, with his tongue tied to no ear but his own, would not listen.

"The great matter," he said, "was the roof. I can get it temporarily patched up, and then, when the season at Dinard is over, I can have the work

done properly. The windows gave me very little trouble, as I found the frames were the regulation size. The furniture and tapestries were easily managed, and I think those busy Paris tradesmen will learn a thing or two from the way we do things at Brionville; eh, Mademoiselle Seline?"

Mademoiselle Cheri, who was as fond of her native town as provincials usually are, promptly agreed to this. Monsieur de Latour could not forbear chuckling at the accounts of his aristocratic splendor which his servants would take back to Brionville.

At last Mélanie managed to get his attention and told him that Mademoiselle de Courcey had called and was much disappointed at not seeing him, but had arranged to come to the villa again the next morning at twelve o'clock, when he must be there to meet her.

"But, my dear," remonstrated Monsieur de Latour, "I am to be at the Chateau of Montplasir at twelve o'clock. However, couldn't you and Mademoiselle Cheri, as I wish to show you the chateau, bring the lady there, and we could have an interview at the chateau as well as here?"

"Certainly, dear uncle," said Mélanie, and putting her hand on his arm, she continued: "I do hope that you will like Mademoiselle de Courcey. Ask Mademoiselle Seline what she thinks of her."

"I admired her very much. She has the unmistakable air of good breeding which I think very necessary to a companion and most difficult to find in that capacity," answered Mademoiselle Cheri, secretly trying to forward the wishes of the two girls. "Don't you think so, monsieur?" she added, turning to Louis.

Louis, who wished to keep out of the imbroglio, was forced to speak, and he uttered only the truth when he cordially agreed with Mademoiselle Cheri.

"And the languages?" asked Monsieur de Latour.

Mademoiselle Cheri and Mélanie looked a little blank at this. They had

been so captivated by Julie that they had not inquired into her accomplishments. But Louis came to the front, saying:

"I have reason to know that she speaks English and German fluently, and is an admirable musician."

Luckily, Monsieur de Latour did not ask from whence Louis had acquired his information, but asked the question which Mélanie had apprehended.

"And how about her age?" he inquired. "She must be over fifty, of course."

There was a pause before Mélanie said timidly:

"She is quite young—not more than two-and-twenty, I fancy. But, uncle, I want her for a girl companion and friend, at least while we are at Dinard, and Mademoiselle Cheri says she will chaperon us both."

Monsieur de Latour put his cup down and looked around sternly. He felt that he had been chicaned by the whole party.

"No, my love," he said positively, "you have been talking nonsense, if you will pardon me for saying so, and you have committed a very great folly in encouraging this young lady, Mademoiselle de Courcey, to suppose that she was by any means the person I desired. I admit all her accomplishments, but she is too young. She would require more chaperoning even than you, and kind as Mademoiselle Cheri is I could not think of imposing two girls upon her instead of one. So I am afraid you will have to give up the notion of having her."

"But, uncle——"

"Not another word on the subject, my dear. She is too young. I wonder that you should not see the impossibility of any such arrangement. Besides, think of the scandal it would give. People would say that I intended to marry the young woman, and, being a bachelor, I must be on my guard."

"I never observed," said Mademoiselle Cheri, "that a bachelor on his guard was any safer than off his guard."

Monsieur de Latour glared at Mademoiselle Cheri. This way she had of giving him penknife thrusts when he least expected them was most unpleasant. He felt then far more inclined to marry Madame de Beauregard than Mademoiselle Cheri, being fully persuaded that he could have either lady at any time he wished.

Louis listened to this conversation with alternate hope and fear. The idea of having Julie established at the chateau where he could see her daily was inexpressibly captivating to him, but her taste for lively adventures, which was ardently fostered by that rollicking old madcap, the Comtesse de Beauregard, made him shiver with apprehension. However, he thought if he could once call Julie his own—and he had reason enough to believe he could—she would, like all other women who love, accommodate herself to his ideas which, although not as strict as Mademoiselle Cheri's, were not exactly as lax as Madame de Beauregard's. The more Mademoiselle Cheri and Mélanie saw of Louis, the better they liked him, and he gave every indication of an intention to live up to his bargain with Monsieur de Latour and to treat Monsieur de Latour and his family and friends with the greatest consideration.

"It would be just as well," said Monsieur de Latour after a while, "that we should have a family meeting and a little festivity at the chateau to commemorate the reunion of the two branches of the family. My lawyers promise to have all of the papers ready in a few days, and then I shall hand over the sum agreed upon to my nephew-to-be, and it may not be all that he will get from me eventually."

To which Louis replied by a sudden sortie on Monsieur de Latour, and an embrace which Monsieur de Latour, rubbing his sides afterward, declared almost cost him his life. But he liked the heartiness and good will which Louis showed, and the indisposition to haggle over the terms of the bargain.

The next morning at ten o'clock Monsieur de Latour was in his glory at

the Chateau of Montplasir. The hammers of workmen resounded upon the roof, masons and carpenters were all over the place, and Monsieur de Latour was inspiring and directing them with more zeal than helpfulness. He distracted the workmen by his directions, called them when they were busy to urge them to make greater haste, and, in short, his wish outran his discretion, as the case is with most people.

The August sun shone brightly, and the old rookery was flooded with the warm blue air. The presence of the workmen and Monsieur de Latour, strutting about declaiming in a loud, cheerful voice, followed by Louis in great spirits, made a complete transformation of the scene. There was but one thing in Louis to which Monsieur de Latour objected, and that was Louis's propensity to embrace the old gentleman on every possible occasion. When he had done this about twenty times that morning, Monsieur de Latour stopped him in the middle of the courtyard and remonstrated strongly.

"Look here," he said, "I can't stand this eternal embracing and kissing on your part. It's all well enough to be grateful, and I like to see the spirit in you, young man, but I can't run the risk of having my ribs broken twenty times a day. There must be some limit put to it."

"Very well, then, dear uncle," said Louis affectionately, "only grant me the privilege of embracing you and kissing the top of your head three times a day. With less I cannot exist."

"Wouldn't once a day answer?" asked Monsieur de Latour dubiously.

"No, a dozen times no! I cannot control the exuberance of my feelings for twenty-four hours consecutively. I must embrace you at least three times a day. Would you consider it a violation of this arrangement, which, after all, seems so inadequate to express my feelings, if I were to put my arm affectionately around your neck, thus?"

Here Louis insinuated his arm around Monsieur de Latour's neck and rested

his head against his new-found uncle's left ear.

"Decidedly so," replied Monsieur de Latour, shaking him off. "It is the first time in my life that I have ever had to repress gratitude; but gratitude such as yours is positively dangerous. I think my life has been in jeopardy a dozen times since I arranged to give you the three hundred thousand francs. You are a very athletic young man and I am not as young as I was once, and although my life is insured I don't care to take unnecessary risks."

"I must then submit," said Louis sorrowfully, withdrawing his arm. "But recollect, three times a day I am to be allowed to express to you by my endearments my affection and grateful thanks."

"Yes, and whenever else you feel the impulse you will have to embrace my umbrella and hat. I put no restrictions whatever upon your endearments to those. Now let us go out upon the terrace and await our friends."

The terrace, like the courtyard and the chateau, was moldering, cracked and broken in every part, but the view of the laughing blue sea, the beautiful gardens and trees and grass and the charming villas of Dinard was most lovely. They had just reached the terrace when Mademoiselle Cheri and Mélanie and Julie appeared. Mélanie ran forward and, taking her uncle's hand, cried:

"Dear uncle, here we are with Mademoiselle de Courcey."

And then Mademoiselle Cheri presented Julie. The instant Monsieur de Latour's eyes rested upon Julie a sudden change came over his feelings. He became acutely conscious of her youth, her beauty, her charm. When a man is in Monsieur de Latour's state of mind, having decided to marry and is merely considering the choice of a lady, he looks at every member of the sex with a critical eye—the whole fair is his as long as he has sixpence in his pocket. The idea recurred to him that he might select, as the future Madame de Latour, a young and pretty girl. He wished to see something more of

the pretended Mademoiselle de Courcey, but it occurred to him at once that he had created rather an awkward complication by his firmly expressed determination not to engage Julie as companion for Mélanie on any terms whatever. Mélanie was delighted, however, and Louis secretly diverted, when Monsieur de Latour promptly began to promenade up and down the terrace by the side of Julie. Louis, by way of giving Julie a chance, took Mademoiselle Chéri and Mélanie off into a corner where there were some decayed seats—everything about the Chateau of Montplasir was decayed—and while ostensibly showing them the view saw Julie getting into the old gentleman's good graces in the most unequivocal manner. Julie, with downcast eyes and the most demure air in the world, was playing off her little practical joke on her trustee, while Monsieur de Latour, blandly unconscious that he was being hoodwinked by the artful young person at his side, was thinking that, after all, no woman is too young for any man and rapidly coming to the determination to have Julie at any price as a member of his entourage.

Not one word on the subject of business was exchanged between them as they promenaded up and down for half an hour. The beauties of the sea and sky, the charms of Dinard, the latest plays in Paris, the last poems and romances, were the subjects on which Julie—the artful Julie—chose to entertain Monsieur de Latour, who was only too willing to be entertained. Being a very clever young person she realized all the headway she was making, and was not in the least surprised when Monsieur de Latour said impressively, after a while:

"Now, my dear mademoiselle, when the subject of your being my niece's companion was first broached and I heard of your youth and—ah—extreme beauty and charm, I said that, notwithstanding your acquirements and accomplishments, you were not old enough to be my niece's companion, who would also be her chaperon."

"Oh, dear Monsieur de Latour," said

Julie in her sweetest voice and demurest manner, "you have no idea how sedate I am. I am serious beyond my years." Which was quite true when she had a mischievous project on hand.

"I know—I know," replied Monsieur de Latour. "I see that you are prudence and primness and propriety itself. But—but—the world won't think so."

"If you, Monsieur de Latour, thought me old enough to be your niece's companion, all the world—I mean our world, that is—would think so, too, because everybody respects your judgment."

This was laying on the flattery where it would do the most good, and Monsieur de Latour smiled delightedly.

"You are very good," he said. "Some people do think me a person of sense. But, although I cannot possibly engage you as my niece's companion, another scheme occurs to me by which she can have the benefit of your charming society, and I, too, I hope, in a measure"—this in a very low voice so that Mademoiselle Chéri, whom Monsieur de Latour supposed to be consumed with jealousy at the other end of the terrace, could not hear.

"Any scheme which you advocate, monsieur, will be highly agreeable to me," replied Julie, seeing that she had brought down her quarry at the first shot.

"It is this—I foresee that I shall have immediate need of a private secretary. Of course, in my business I have persons to do that sort of work, but a private secretary must be a member of my family, and you are the only person whom I have yet seen whom I should be willing to have in that position. Do you happen to have stenography among your accomplishments?"

"What is that?" asked Julie innocently.

"Oh, well, never mind. Did you ever do any typewriting?"

"No, indeed," said Julie, laughing, "but I have seen a typewriting machine two or three times."

"Well, that's no matter—I can get along without that."

"But I can write," said Julie.

Monsieur de Latour remembered that the only writing of hers which he had seen was far from legible, but he was not going to let a thing like ignorance of stenography or typewriting or even writing a good, plain hand stand in the way of his engaging a pretty girl as secretary.

"Well, well," he said, "I think we can manage. I myself write a good, plain, legible hand, and I could assist you."

"Oh, if you would be so kind," replied Julie, "I should think it would be perfectly charming. I never thought I could be a private secretary, but I am sure if I have neither stenography nor typewriting to do and you will write your own letters that I could fill the place acceptably."

"Certainly, certainly you can," replied Monsieur de Latour. "And as for salary, only name your price."

But Julie was too wary for this.

"Whatever you think, Monsieur de Latour," she said.

"What do you say to five hundred francs the month?"

"I say five hundred thanks for it," replied Julie, laughing, to whom five hundred francs was by no means the enormous sum which Monsieur de Latour supposed it would be.

Then came the breaking the news to Mademoiselle Chéri and Mélanie, but, as Monsieur de Latour reflected, they had tormented him to take Julie, and now they would have no right to complain if he took her for his benefit and not theirs. So he marched up to the group at the other end of the terrace and said to Mélanie:

"My dear, you have the most indulgent uncle in the world. As soon as I found your heart was set upon having Mademoiselle de Courcey as your companion, I determined to gratify you. It is true that her youth renders her unequal to the position of chaperon, but as Mademoiselle Chéri has kindly consented to take that upon herself as long as we are at Dinard, I

think we can arrange to have Mademoiselle de Courcey in another capacity. She is to be my private secretary."

At that a look of intelligence flashed between Louis and Julie. By some occult means Louis understood that the prospect of being near him had something to do with the present arrangement, and a thrill of delight went through him. Mélanie was immensely pleased, and only Mademoiselle Chéri looked a little disconcerted. Monsieur de Latour thought it was easy to account for this last. All women are jealous.

"So now," continued Monsieur de Latour, "I hope very much that within ten days we can be established in this wing of the chateau and have some pleasant days together before the end of the season. We shall, of course, find acquaintances here. Among others"—here he turned to Julie, meaning to impress her with the fact that he knew some people at Dinard with handles to their names—"I may reckon the Comtesse de Beauregard, one of the greatest families in France, but a very terrible old lady, mademoiselle, and much too young for her years. Then she has a friend, General Granier, as old as Methuselah and as gay as a bird. Madame de Beauregard, I think, should be a little more discreet than she is. But some women never seem to realize the passage of time."

"Nor some men, either," replied Mademoiselle Chéri. "A woman always realizes that she must some day be old, and the idea is too painful to be ignored, but no man, particularly if he is unmarried, ever actually believes that age can touch him, and when he is a regular old wreck he thinks, just as General Granier does, that he is Apollo and Adonis rolled in one."

This speech annoyed Monsieur de Latour very much. Most people, since he had acquired the power to write his cheque for three hundred thousand francs without seriously inconveniencing himself, treated him with a very great degree of respect, but Sélène

Cheri seemed unable to discern the difference between him now and in the days when he was a clerk in her father's soap works.

Monsieur de Latour, feeling called upon to justify his somewhat precipitate action in engaging this pretty young lady as his private secretary, and quite determined to have his own way in the matter, remarked:

"I think, mademoiselle, we must arrange to begin work at the earliest possible moment. I have some very important matters to attend to—business affairs concerning my nephew"—here Monsieur de Latour waved his arm majestically toward Louis—"and myself, so if you could report to me, we will say tomorrow morning at ten o'clock, at the Villa Rose, we could begin work."

"But why not here, monsieur?" asked Julie innocently. "If the weather is fine, as it promises to be, we could work on the terrace."

"Quite true. What a very prompt and businesslike young person you are! Very well—if fair, tomorrow morning on the terrace at ten; if rainy, at the Villa Rose."

Louis, his breath almost taken away by Julie's proposition, gazed at her in astonishment, but nothing could exceed that young person's calmness and composure. Mademoiselle Cheri and Mélanie were not much used to private secretaries, and they had been so startled by Monsieur de Latour's sudden change of mind that nothing further could surprise them. And, besides, as they had both urged him to secure Julie's companionship for Mélanie, they were hardly in a position to oppose him.

Louis then invited them to inspect his ancestral mansion, which he professed, with the utmost politeness, to consider Monsieur de Latour's ancestral mansion likewise. The prospect of being established there struck the fancy of them all. It was a unique pleasure, heretofore out of the experience of each, and seemed like the beginning of one of those idylls of times past when a party of congenial

persons could segregate themselves for mutual enjoyment and keep the whole world at bay.

Old Suzette had, by some hocus-pocus, acquired some fruit and cakes which she served, meanwhile scrutinizing the party closely and coming rapidly to the conclusion that Monsieur Louis, as she called him, was deeply in love with Mademoiselle Julie, and Mademoiselle Julie had a soft spot in her heart for Monsieur Louis.

It was past one when the party separated. Before they left Louis claimed the privilege, which Monsieur de Latour had accorded him, of a midday embrace, and much to the amusement of the ladies and the anguish of Monsieur de Latour he embraced and kissed him most fervently.

As Louis stood on the terrace watching Julie's graceful figure disappearing in the shady path below, old Suzette came up, and planting herself with both arms akimbo before him, said:

"It is the young lady in black, and I have a secret to tell you, monsieur. She is very much in love with you."

At which Louis joyfully embraced her as he had done Monsieur de Latour, and, printing a sounding kiss on her leathery old cheek, cried out:

"Do you think so? Heaven send you may be right!"

IV

THE next ten days passed in a whirl of excitement for all of the people associated with the Chateau of Montplasir. Besides the work going on at the chateau it was necessary to prepare the legal papers making Louis the nephew of Monsieur de Latour, and this gave Monsieur de Latour a valid excuse for Julie's services. He discovered at once the importance of making copies of everything he wished in his own round, clear, clerk-like hand, for Julie's writing was expansive and illegible beyond description, so that really Monsieur de Latour acted

more as her private secretary than she did as private secretary to him. This, of course, took up much time, and he did the hardest work of his life during those ten days. He intrusted Julie, however, with the task of forwarding and receiving his letters and documents, with emphatic orders that his copy, and not hers, of all those documents go forth to the world, while hers were to be kept merely as duplicates.

Every morning Julie would appear on the terrace, the only spot available, as the chateau swarmed with workmen. There, with her pretty head bent over the rustic table used as a writing-table, she would scribble away industriously, while Monsieur de Latour laboriously copied every word that his pretty amanuensis wrote. Louis hovered around, wondering what was to be the outcome of Julie's escapade.

One of the features of it was that on the second morning that Julie arrived on the terrace she was soon followed by the appearance of the Comtesse de Beauregard, her faithful attendant, General Granier, and Eugène de Contiac, whom the old lady kept a strict watch upon lest he should go to church or take to reading sermons. Monsieur de Latour felt highly honored at being tracked to his lair, so to speak, by so great a lady as the Comtesse de Beauregard, and when she skipped up to him and playfully prodded him with her parasol he was very much delighted. He had invited her, it was true, to make him a visit when he should be in a position to entertain her, but it was extremely gratifying to him that she should anticipate her formal visit in this manner. He greeted her warmly, and Madame de Beauregard's first speech was:

"So you have a private secretary young enough to be your granddaughter?" And, turning to Julie, she cried: "What is your name, my dear?"

"I am Mademoiselle Julie de Courcey," responded Julie, acting her part quite as well as Madame de Beauregard.

"Very well—I like your independ-

ence, and this afternoon, if you will come down to the promenade, we will have tea together."

General Granier seemed to know Julie also, as did Eugène de Contiac, but Monsieur de Latour, remembering that his private secretary's connections were high, attached no consequence to that. Madame de Beauregard insisted upon being shown through the chateau, and was so pleased with it that she reminded Monsieur de Latour of his invitation to visit the chateau, saying she meant to come and bring all her family and friends and remain for several weeks as soon as the place was habitable.

"And remember, monsieur," she continued, "I shall require at least six rooms—a bedroom, dressing-room and salon for myself, a bedroom for my maid, one for Eugène de Contiac, and one for my lawyer, Monsieur Bertoux, when he arrives, because I foresee that I shall soon have to change my will. Ever since my nephew here came within reach of your estimable niece he has been going to the good very fast indeed. I have reason to believe that he goes to church secretly every morning, and General Granier tells me he does not think I shall ever be able to make a man of Eugène."

Eugène at this looked very sheepish and mumbled:

"I haven't been in bed before two o'clock a night since I came to Dinard."

"By the way," cried Madame de Beauregard, "I sha'n't require a room for my niece and your ward. She is in Paris, nursing an old cousin of ours, who has been quite ill."

"But I thought," responded Monsieur de Latour, a little puzzled, "that you said she was in the country, and then you said she was in a convent."

"And now I say she is in Paris," tartly replied Madame de Beauregard. "My dear man, do you think that my niece, a girl brought up by me, sticks in one place like a gate-post planted in the ground? No, indeed! My niece has too much of the spirit and independence which my nephew lacks. I don't know how in the world Provi-

dence ever came to make such a mistake as to send Julie into the world a girl, and this milksop, Eugène de Contiac, a boy. But Providence does make mistakes—there's no doubt about that."

Monsieur de Latour did not know whether this was heterodoxy or not, but he did know that Madame de Beauregard was a comtesse of one of the greatest families in France, and was coming to visit him, and thinking Providence could take care of itself, made no attempt to defend its acts.

"I shall be most pleased, madame," he said, "if your niece will accompany you when you pay me the visit you promise, and I need not say that the whole chateau will be at your disposal, and in this my nephew, I am sure, will unite with me."

To this Louis assented politely, but in truth knew not whether to be more frightened or pleased at Madame de Beauregard's threatened visit to the chateau. Her presence, it was true, would give a certain protection to Julie when her escapade was found out, as it must be, but the old lady was such a persistent encourager of everything in the nature of a lark that there was no telling what would happen if she were on the spot to goad Julie on.

Madame de Beauregard then launched out into a description of her latest fad, automobiling in her fifty-horse-power motor-car, and in these adventures she had the assistance of General Granier and of a semi-royal duke as old and as kittenish as herself. She cackled with delight when she told of running into ditches, lamp-posts, shop windows, cows and pedestrians; of the car turning somersaults and scattering its occupants all over the place, and wound up by inviting Monsieur de Latour to accompany her on an expedition that afternoon, in company with the semi-royal duke and General Granier. Monsieur de Latour turned pale at the proposition, and paler still when General Granier mentioned that in the last upset his leg, which he always carried loaded, had accidentally gone off and sent a bullet

through the hat of the semi-royal duke.

"Do you mean to say," asked Monsieur de Latour in a shocked voice of General Granier, "that you keep that leg loaded on these expeditions?"

"Certainly," answered General Granier. "I am practicing a new feat, shooting at objects as we bowl along about forty miles an hour."

"But when you are upset, which seems to occur every time you go out? I should not like to have been in the duke's place in that last accident."

"My dear man," interrupted Madame de Beauregard, "we are not upset more than two or three times a week. And the duke did not mind having his hat spoiled. After all, you can buy a very good hat anywhere for fifteen francs."

This view of the accident was novel to Monsieur de Latour, but the notion of appearing on the streets of Dinard in a motor-car with Madame de Beauregard and a semi-royal duke, the glorious reputation he would acquire of being a sad dog, the commotion it would make at Brionville, and, above all, the acute misery he imagined it would give Mademoiselle Cheri, were vastly attractive to him. Madame de Beauregard, however, was not in the habit of leaving gentlemen any choice in accepting her invitations, and demanded that Monsieur de Latour should meet her at a certain place in the town that afternoon at four o'clock. She took a great deal of notice of both Louis and Julie, but did not ask them to accompany her upon the proposed motor-car expedition.

The old lady then departed with her suite. Monsieur de Latour, torn with conflicting emotions about the automobile expedition, was quite unequal to any work that day, and Louis volunteering to answer some routine letters for him according to general directions, Monsieur de Latour left the two at the writing-table on the terrace, where they spent most of the morning. Monsieur de Latour, wandering like an unquiet ghost about the chateau trying to make up his mind whether he should

risk his neck or not in the auto-car that afternoon, noticed vaguely that Louis and Julie appeared to have a great deal to say to each other as they sat on the terrace and scribbled at intervals.

When Julie took her departure for the Villa Rose shortly after one o'clock Louis went in search of Monsieur de Latour, who was found sitting in one of the deserted rooms, his head in his hands.

"My dear uncle," said Louis, "what is the matter?"

"I am considering," responded Monsieur de Latour, his ears still in his hands, "whether it is worth while to risk my neck in that auto-car expedition this afternoon or not. Besides the danger of being upset and of being run into, there is that terrible risk of being shot by General Granier's leg."

"Or drowned," solemnly added Louis. "The last accident that Madame de Beauregard had the auto-car ran into the sea and headed for the bottom like a submarine boat."

Monsieur de Latour groaned.

"But you must not flinch," continued Louis sternly. "You, who aspire to the headship of the house of de Latour, afraid of being drowned or crushed or shot! The de Latours are hard to kill. Have you never heard of that distinguished ancestor of mine who determined to commit suicide because a lady had preferred the favor of the great Napoleon to himself? He took a dose of poison, tied a rope around his neck, had a pistol in his hand and jumped overboard in the determination to meet death either by poison, hanging, shooting or drowning. He swallowed so much salt water that he got rid of the poison, and, firing his pistol, cut the rope and was washed ashore by a huge wave without being in the least injured."

"Pray heaven his fate may be mine," was Monsieur de Latour's pious comment.

Louis continued urging him, and finally Monsieur de Latour screwed up his courage to the point of making an elaborate toilet and meeting his ap-

pointment with Madame de Beauregard at four o'clock. As soon as he had disappeared and might be supposed to be out of the town of Dinard, Louis sallied forth to pay a visit to the ladies at the Villa Rose.

It was not yet five o'clock when he arrived, but on being ushered into the garden there he found Julie sitting with a piece of needlework in her hand and a look of infantile innocence on her face. Mademoiselle Cheri, who saw Louis's arrival from her window, came down promptly into the garden; nevertheless, Louis and Julie had a delicious five minutes alone, for every moment they spent together was delicious to both of them. Then Mélanie appeared, and Louis exerting all his powers to please, which were considerable, charmed Mademoiselle Cheri and Mélanie almost as much as he did Julie. They had tea merrily together, and it seemed scarcely an hour had passed since Louis's arrival when they heard a neighboring clock strike seven.

At the same moment Monsieur de Latour entered the garden. He was a pitiable-looking object. One side of him was all mud and the other side of him all dust, his hat was battered, his trousers totally wrecked, and he limped slightly. To the anxious inquiries of the ladies he only replied shortly:

"I have been automobiling with Madame de Beauregard."

"You have got out of it better than most people," said Louis.

"Yes," said Monsieur de Latour, "I have, on the whole, been fortunate. General Granier kept up a continual fusillade and succeeded in potting a cow and a calf. He fired over my shoulder and under my legs, and, I need not say, made me very uneasy. As for that devil of a chauffeur, I believe he did his best to upset us, egged on by Madame de Beauregard and the duke. None of them seemed afraid of anything—except me, but I candidly admit that the next time Madame de Beauregard asks me to go automobiling I shall take the first train for Paris. Give me some tea, Mélanie, for heaven's sake, and then I shall go to bed."

Which he proceeded to do as soon as he had disposed of his tea.

By eight o'clock he was sound asleep in bed. Just as he was comfortably tucked in he heard a tremendous commotion in front of the villa. Madame de Beauregard had come to ask him to go upon a moonlight expedition in the motor-car, but this Monsieur de Latour firmly declined to do, and for fear Madame de Beauregard should come up and drag him out of bed he locked and double-locked the door and breathed a sigh of relief when he heard the auto-car clattering away in the distance.

For several days after the auto-car expedition Monsieur de Latour was laid up for repairs; but he was nevertheless able, though somewhat dilapidated, to get about and especially to superintend the work being done at the Chateau of Montplasir. He did not, however, do any more automobiling with Madame de Beauregard, although the old lady pursued him to that end in such a way that she declared she was afraid every rag of her reputation would be lost. It was in vain that she offered him the inducement of the semi-royal duke's society and other very great people. Monsieur de Latour was firm in declining. He loved rank and high-sounding names, but he loved his own carcass better than either and refused to risk it. He made business his excuse and required Julie's services every day at the chateau; and Julie was always promptly on hand.

But, with the single exception of being always on the spot at the moment, Julie's ideas of business were rudimentary. After a day or two, when replies to his letters began to come in, Monsieur de Latour discovered a peculiarity of Julie's, which was that it seemed impossible she should write any communication without omitting at least one word. It was rarely more than one, and generally, as Julie urged in extenuation, a very little one, an "an" or a "but," but it was always at a critical point and invariably resulted in endless confusion and misunderstandings. At first Monsieur de Latour, meaning to

instruct Julie in the art of transacting the business of a private secretary, remonstrated with her kindly. Julie took these remonstrances in the most amiable manner possible, made profuse apologies and promises to reform, and repeated the mistake as soon as possible thereafter. Then Monsieur de Latour attempted to be stern, and Julie explained that, much as she sought to be exact, it was impossible for her to be so because he was so interesting she was always wondering about him, whether he had been happy all his life, and if he had ever had a real love affair, and how many women had wished to marry him. At that Monsieur de Latour's mouth, in spite of him, came open like a rattrap, and there was nothing more to be said.

Again he was seriously vexed. By Julie's process he was made to declare that a pair of carriage horses which he had sold for a high price had not four good legs between them, and he knew it at the time of selling. When this was traced home to Julie she laughed delightedly and cried:

"But you got the money, didn't you, monsieur? What difference does it make about the horses' legs?"

"It makes a great deal of difference," replied Monsieur de Latour grimly, "whether a horse has four legs or two."

"Then," cried Julie, "why not write and tell the person who bought the horses all about General Granier's leg? That will amuse him and then he will forget all about the horses' legs."

"Mademoiselle!" roared Monsieur de Latour, now fairly roused.

But before he could say another word Julie jumped up and, blowing him a couple of kisses from her fingertips, cried:

"There, there, don't worry about it! You have got the money, and that's all—my time is up—come to tea at five—adieu!" And she skipped off.

This was certainly very provoking, thought Monsieur de Latour, but he had encountered so much opposition in securing Julie's services that he was

loath to admit what Mademoiselle Cheri had said from the beginning, that Julie was not fitted to be a private secretary.

Meanwhile preparations for the house-party went on famously, and Monsieur de Latour, who had among his other virtues a true hospitality, looked forward with pleasure to having the chateau full of guests. Louis insisted that Monsieur de Latour should play the host quite as much as himself, and Monsieur de Latour was more than willing.

He had asked Madame de Beauregard several times about his ward, Mademoiselle de Brésac, and had sent her a cordial invitation to join the party at the chateau. But Mademoiselle de Brésac appeared to be a will-o'-the-wisp—so much so that Monsieur de Latour one day said to Louis, as Madame de Beauregard with her party in a magnificent red devil whizzed past them on the road:

"I think there is some mystery about my ward, Mademoiselle de Brésac. I find it impossible to get from Madame de Beauregard Mademoiselle de Brésac's actual abiding-place. One day she is in the country near here, another day she is in a convent at St. Malo, another time she is nursing an invalid cousin at Paris, yesterday she was making a visit to England, and this morning Madame de Beauregard tells me she is in Switzerland. She appears to be quite as gay as her aunt."

"Yes," assented Louis, "but I have reason to know that she is very charming."

"I wish very much that she could join our party at the chateau for next week. Can you contrive to find out where she is and to secure her presence?"

"I think, possibly," said Louis meditatively as they walked along the sunny street, "I might do so."

"It would be a real gratification to me, and it would add to the obligations I already owe you, for, my dear Louis, I appreciate very much your politeness to me and to my niece, and

also to Mademoiselle Cheri. There are some things in our agreement which cannot be reckoned in money, and one of them is your courtesy to my family. It is evident that you are not ashamed of us."

"Far from it," replied Louis. "You know the pride and delight I take in you, the very flower of the de Latours, and I am more than pleased to acknowledge Mélanie as my cousin."

It was with genuine enjoyment that Monsieur de Latour, on the tenth day after the influx of workmen at the Chateau of Montplasir, saw the last of them depart and awaited the arrival of a house-party consisting of Mademoiselle Cheri and his niece, of Julie, whom he positively declared it impossible to transact business without, and whom it was equally impossible to transact business with, of Madame de Beauregard and Eugène de Contiac. Monsieur de Latour had felt some compunction at not inviting General Granier to stay at the chateau, but although his present inclination was that Madame de Beauregard was entirely too old for him and Julie just the right age, yet he decided that General Granier, with his military air, his title as general and his interesting wooden leg, was too dangerous a rival. As a matter of fact, General Granier had endless stories to tell of his prowess with his leg, of various kinds of game brought down, the snuffing of candles, the hitting of bull's-eyes and all the other achievements of a crack shot. Madame de Beauregard had frankly asked, and even insisted, that General Granier should be asked, but the more she insisted the less inclined Monsieur de Latour was to bring the fascinating old general into competition with himself.

"To tell you the truth, madame," he had said to the Comtesse de Beauregard, "I am afraid of that leg of General Granier's. I believe it is always loaded and is liable to go off at any time. Now, suppose we were sitting at dinner, for example, and the general should inadvertently clap his hand into his pocket and touch the trigger—what do you suppose would happen?"

"That would depend altogether upon the direction of the leg, my dear man," replied Madame de Beauregard, who often addressed Monsieur de Latour in this familiar manner. "But for my part I find General Granier's leg far more interesting than his head, and I am not in the least afraid of either. However, I shall ask him up to tea every afternoon, and you can invite him to remain to dinner, and if you don't I will."

Such was the lady whom Monsieur de Latour had invited to pay him a visit. It even occurred to him that it was just as well his ward, Mademoiselle de Brésac, did not see very much of her aunt, and out of regard for her father's memory Monsieur de Latour would have welcomed the marriage of his ward so that he could see her in the hands of a discreet husband.

However, all these misgivings were in abeyance on the August afternoon when Monsieur de Latour, with Louis, made a final inspection of the wing of the chateau which had been made habitable. Wonders had been worked by the army of artisans. The walls and ceilings which showed age and decay most were covered, when possible, with draperies, pictures and mirrors. The discolored floors were concealed by costly rugs, and car-loads of furniture had been distributed among the great rooms. A large domestic staff had arrived from Brionville, and Suzette had been deposed as major-domo, cook and housemaid. Her services, however, as valet were retained by Louis, who declared his intention of teaching her to shave him, as she already bathed and dressed him.

Suzette was delighted at the turn affairs had taken, for she had become much attached to Louis in the days of his poverty and rejoiced in his prosperity. Louis, himself, felt as if he were taking part in the adventures of Aladdin, and walked about the chateau in a dazed fashion, wondering if the gilt chairs were real or if the rugs were not an optical illusion. Daily his gratitude became more effervescent, and he implored from Monsieur de

Latour the privilege of embracing him at least four instead of three times a day, but this Monsieur de Latour promptly refused.

"But I must embrace something," said Louis in the exuberance of feeling.

"Then go and try your hand on Madame de Beauregard," replied Monsieur de Latour.

Louis misinterpreted this recommendation, and within half an hour afterward came very near being caught in the act of embracing Julie by Monsieur de Latour. Julie was sitting in her usual place on the terrace before the writing-table, waiting for Monsieur de Latour to arrive, when Louis, stealing up to her, whispered in her ear:

"Julie, tomorrow the papers will be signed making me Monsieur de Latour's nephew, and three hundred thousand francs will be mine, in addition to the Chateau of Montplasir."

Louis paused, and Julie, whose pretty eyes were downcast, raised them and giving him her bewitching sidelong glance, said:

"I care nothing for your three hundred thousand francs."

Louis's face grew pale, and paler still when she added after a moment:

"Nor for the Chateau of Montplasir."

And then, looking around and seeing no one in sight, she extended her hand a little toward Louis—a trifling gesture, but full of meaning. Her eyes said plainly, "It is you for whom I care." The look was illuminating.

"Mademoiselle, may I show you the orangery which has just been formed at the south end of the terrace?"

Julie rose willingly enough, and the two, walking on air, as it were, passed along the terrace to the extreme end where dozens of orange trees in tubs made a place of sylvan beauty. When they were under the green arcade they were quite secure from observation. There was no time. Neither knew how it happened, but suddenly Louis's arm was around Julie and their lips had met. And the next moment Monsieur de Latour's jovial voice re-

sounded at the other end of the arcade.

"Where is Mademoiselle de Courcey? I have something here very important to be copied."

Julie scuttled back to the writing-table in less time than it takes to tell it, and Louis, far less self-composed, dashed around the corner of the terrace and disappeared. Monsieur de Latour came bustling out with a telegram in his hand.

"My dear young lady," he said, "please answer this at once, and pray be careful. I think, so far as I know, that you have not yet written anything for me precisely as I dictated it. There is always a word or two goes wrong. But this is very important. Here you see at the factory they are asking directions about a large quantity of soap now boiling. They want to know about adding more soda. Now, write the despatch, thus."

Monsieur de Latour gave the address and then dictated slowly and portentously:

"Whatever you do, put no more soda in the sixteen vats.

"Now write it out for me quickly, so that I can send it off."

Julie, who was still palpitating and blushing, and to whom the absent Louis was nearer than the present Monsieur de Latour, wrote out the despatch and handed it to Monsieur de Latour to read. He put on his spectacles and tried to make it out, but could not.

"It's very inconvenient," he said after a moment or two, "having a private secretary who can't write legibly. I shall have to write this despatch myself."

He sat down and wrote it out, and then calling a servant to Julie to send the despatch, hustled away himself to give the last orders for the entertainment of his guests. When the servant came, Julie, following her usual practice, handed him her own despatch and carefully tucked Monsieur de Latour's away in her belt, which served her for a despatch-box, escritoire and burglar-proof safe combined, for the

important papers confided to her charge.

And then Madame de Beauregard's screeches of laughter being heard in the courtyard, Julie saw that gay old person descending from her favorite red devil, which was snorting and puffing before the main door. She was accompanied by Eugène de Contiac, General Granier, and by an unexpected guest, her lawyer, Monsieur Bertoux. He was a staid and somewhat wary-looking man, which would naturally be the case, as he lived in hot pursuit of Madame de Beauregard and almost monthly changes of her will. Monsieur de Latour, followed by Louis, came out to greet them.

"You see, my dear man," cried the old lady, "I have brought Monsieur Bertoux along with me. He is a very pleasant sort of person, and more interesting than he looks, as you will find out. And besides, I foresee that unless my nephew changes his course I shall be compelled not only to leave him out of my will, but to cut off his allowance. It is always the way," cried the old lady quite angrily; "just as soon as he falls under the influence of your niece Mélanie Eugène forgets all the instructions I have given him to be a man, and a very larky one at that, and gets so dreadfully pious and moral there is really no standing him. And as of course he will have to see a great deal of Mélanie during this visit, I thought it just as well to have my lawyer on the spot, in case he should go to extremes and insist on going to church every morning, for example. Not that I have the slightest personal objection to Mélanie—it is only her principles that I oppose, and if she will turn about and commit a few indiscretions I shall be more than willing for the match. But I don't want any of these pious and God-fearing men in my family, and Eugène must be a rake if he wants to get my money."

And then, turning to Louis, she said:

"Now, if you will engage to lead this goody-goody boy astray I will give you something handsome, because I

see that you are one of the devil's darlings, and that's the sort I like."

"Madame, you praise me beyond my deserts," replied Louis gallantly, taking the old lady's hand and kissing it impudently. "But if you, with your fascinations and delightful example, cannot succeed in leading him astray, nobody can."

The old lady screamed with delight at this bold declaration, which was received by Eugène in sheepish silence, and at that very moment Mélanie and Mademoiselle Chéri appeared. Madame de Beauregard had a voice like an auctioneer, and her words were plainly audible to the advancing Mélanie. Madame de Beauregard, however, with the utmost good will greeted her and Mademoiselle Chéri.

"I dare say, my dear," she cried to Mélanie, "you heard every word that I said, and I mean to stand by it. Either you and Eugène have got to change your principles, or you won't get a centime of my money. While I am here I shall give you every opportunity to commit any of the delightful improprieties which you might, but won't."

Eugène and Mélanie presented a pitiable sight while this was going on. Both blushed and were embarrassed beyond measure. But Monsieur de Latour came to their relief by cordially greeting Madame de Beauregard and inviting the entire party to make a tour of the renovated wing. Marvels had certainly been accomplished, and Monsieur de Latour, anxious to justify himself for the employment of his private secretary, would say of everything, "This was the result of Mademoiselle de Courcy's taste," or, "I contrived to get this done through Mademoiselle de Courcy's promptness in telegraphing my orders."

The party at his heels listened to all of these explanations, and Madame de Beauregard cackled every time that Monsieur de Latour brought in Julie's name, and was in a regular ecstasy when he said, with ponderous courtesy:

"My only regret is that your niece, Mademoiselle de Brésac, is not of the

party. Nothing would have given me more pleasure than to have entertained the daughter of the Vicomte de Brésac, who honored me with his friendship, at the Chateau of Montplasir, the ancestral seat of the de Latours."

"Oh," cried Mademoiselle Chéri innocently, "how pleased your father, the soap-boiler, would have been to see you in such grand company as this."

Monsieur de Latour professed not to hear this speech but listened rather to Madame de Beauregard, who was saying:

"It is a thousand pities, my dear man, that my niece is taking the mud baths at Carlsbad. You should know that girl."

Monsieur de Latour listened to this in silence, but looked toward Louis with an expression which said plainly, "I told you so!"

Tea was served on the terrace, and, after the manner of such affairs, Julie and Louis found themselves sitting next each other, while Mélanie and Eugène, some distance apart, yet exchanged timid glances. Madame de Beauregard held her court at the tea-table. Monsieur Bertoux was a very silent man, who never opened his mouth except to put something in it, and seemed to accept quietly his position of a rod held *in terrorem* over Eugène de Contiac as a punishment for good behavior.

The purple twilight fell and a faint young moon shimmered upon the sea in which the large, palpitating stars were reflected. The daylight of late summer had gone before eight o'clock, when dinner was announced.

The dining-saloon, which a fortnight before had been a picture of gaunt neglect, was now resplendent. Shaded lamps and candles shone everywhere, pictures, mirrors, draperies covered the walls; the alleged Salvator Rosa had been removed and cast into the ash heap. The table glittered with glass and silver, and was charmingly decorated with deep red roses, and an exquisite dinner was served. Everybody's spirits rose, including even those of the silent Monsieur Bertoux, who

foresaw that he would make half a dozen wills for Madame de Beauregard before she left the Chateau of Montplasir.

Toward the end of the dinner the butler handed a telegram to Monsieur de Latour. By permission of the ladies he opened it, and his countenance changed at once.

"This is outrageous!" he cried. "I telegraphed to Brionville expressly that no more soda was to be added to those sixteen vats of soap, and here they send me this answer:

"Your despatch received. Have added soda, as directed, to sixteen vats."

"I sent no such despatch, and if the people in the telegraph office sent such a one I shall claim heavy damages. That means sixteen vats of soap ruined!"

Then, excusing himself, Monsieur de Latour hustled off to the telephone, where he remained in angry expostulation with the telegraph office for ten minutes. Julie, meanwhile, seated next Louis, was quite smiling and at her ease. When Monsieur de Latour returned his brow was clouded, and as the ladies were leaving for the drawing-room where coffee was served, Monsieur de Latour politely but grimly requested Julie to remain.

"Certainly," replied Julie, "but may your nephew, Monsieur Louis, remain too? Because you look as if you would eat me up, and I am afraid to be left with you. And, besides that, you are so fascinating that I am really afraid people will think I am trying to marry you, so I think we must have a chaperon."

"Just as you like, mademoiselle," replied Monsieur de Latour in the crossest tone he had ever used to a young and pretty woman.

When he was left alone in the dining-room with Julie and Louis he began in a tone of profound vexation:

"My dear young lady, when I engaged you as my private secretary I knew that you had none of the qualifications which are usually required in that capacity, but I thought you could write a simple despatch at my dicta-

tion, especially when I warned you to be very careful. Now, in everything that you have written for me you have managed to get at least one word wrong."

"But only one word, monsieur," said Julie, going and sitting down in a chair and helping herself to a bunch of grapes.

"But that one word has always produced a cataclysm. Do you see the result of leaving out one word in that despatch about the soda?"

"Yes, indeed," cried Julie, snipping off the grapes and handing some to Louis. "These are delicious grapes—I wonder if they are grown at Dinard? Yes, Monsieur de Latour, I dare say those telegraph people are right and I did leave out one word, but only one, and that such a little one."

"It was big enough to ruin sixteen vats of soap," tartly replied Monsieur de Latour.

He wished that Julie were not quite so pretty, and that he could keep his eyes off her pink fingers and rosy mouth as she disposed of the grapes.

"But I heard you say yourself, monsieur," she answered, "that you never used soap—you always used white sand—so what does it matter about the sixteen vats?"

Monsieur de Latour groaned. Would he ever be able to make Julie understand business? At the same time, the thought of parting with her was not agreeable to him—he enjoyed her society too much.

"Very well, mademoiselle," he said. "All I have to say is that you must be more careful in the future. The notary will be here tomorrow, bringing the papers arranging matters between my nephew and myself, and, luckily, he will no doubt correct any blunders which you may have made in the copy which I dictated to you."

"I haven't made any blunders," cried Julie, laughing. "I wrote exactly what you dictated, and if there are any blunders they will be the notary's. Come, now, if you are through scolding me, let us go and have coffee with the rest."

Monsieur de Latour had meant to give her a tremendous wigging, but instead of that he found himself led, ostensibly by the arm and secretly by the nose, into the drawing-room, with Julie on his arm and Louis bringing up the rear.

As they entered the drawing-room, Julie joyfully proclaimed:

"Dear people, I have made the most amusing mistake this time. I have ruined sixteen vats of soap for Monsieur de Latour, and he, poor darling, takes it like an angel. But I won't do so any more, I promise you, monsieur."

"No, you won't," replied Monsieur de Latour. "I sha'n't give you the chance."

And then, like the hospitable host he was, he proceeded to forget all about it, and they had a merry evening together, enlivened by Julie's songs at the piano.

V

THE next day at twelve o'clock was the hour fixed for the signing of the papers making the adoption of Louis legal and transferring three hundred thousand francs in the Bank of France to his credit. All of the guests of the Chateau of Montplasir were invited to assemble in the grand salon to witness this important affair. The notary, with his clerk, arrived, the papers were brought out and examined, and Monsieur de Latour, with a gold pen, a pompous air and a great flourish, signed his name. This was followed by Louis, who took the occasion to make a graceful speech of thanks to Monsieur de Latour, and to assure him that he felt it an honor to be related to so upright and enterprising a citizen. Monsieur de Latour replied affectionately, and then, luncheon being served, all present drank to the health of the new head of the house of de Latour.

Monsieur de Latour was indeed a happy man. He had been made a gentleman, and he considered three hundred thousand francs a very small price to pay for the honor.

All were in high spirits, and even Mademoiselle Cheri forebore to utter some of those plain and rather unpleasing truths with which she had occasionally prodded Monsieur de Latour.

The ladies, after luncheon, retired for their siesta, the party arranging to meet on the terrace, as usual, at five o'clock for tea. Monsieur de Latour said to Louis:

"Now, my dear nephew, come with me into the grand salon, and let us talk over our future arrangements, and I should be obliged to you, Mademoiselle de Courcey, if you will come, too, as I may need your services as amanuensis."

"Certainly," replied Julie, "but first let me go and curl my hair. This damp climate takes all the curl out."

Monsieur de Latour was a little annoyed at this, especially in the presence of Mademoiselle Cheri, who said nothing but saw everything. However, it would be a bold man who would refuse permission to a young lady to curl her hair, and so Monsieur de Latour merely asked her presence as soon as was convenient.

In the grand salon he unlocked the escritoire in which the papers had been stowed, and taking them out began to go over them for the second time with Louis. All at once Monsieur de Latour started and turned pale.

"Why, look here," he said, "I didn't notice this before, but instead of me, Victor Louis de Latour, adopting you, Louis Victor de Latour, here I see—" Here Monsieur de Latour stopped, paled, and with a shaking finger pointed to the impressive legal paper with its great seals.

And there, sure enough, as plain as print, Louis Victor de Latour had adopted Victor Louis de Latour. Louis examined it carefully and laid it down. Monsieur de Latour, running his hands frantically through his hair, cried out:

"It is all the work of that good-for-nothing Julie, who is now upstairs curling her hair. Well, it will have to be changed—that's all. The fact is,

she has never yet written a letter or prepared a document for me that she has not got one word wrong. But she is so devilish pretty and so fascinating and such a delightful little scamp altogether that there is no being angry with her. However, I shall give her a good scolding for this, and the work will all have to be done over again."

Louis during all this had sat calmly examining the papers spread out before him. His silence aroused Monsieur de Latour's suspicions.

"Of course," cried the old soap-boiler, advancing and mopping his brow, "you see the necessity for undoing this nonsensical performance. You being my uncle, indeed!"

"I don't know about that," replied Louis coolly. "First let me ask you one question. Are you really in love with Mademoiselle Julie?"

The question staggered Monsieur de Latour, and he sat down quickly, as if someone had hit him a blow on the forehead.

"Well," he said after a moment, "I don't know whether I am or not, but one thing is certain—I intend to have the benefit of her society. It has occurred to me several times in the last few days that you were paying Mademoiselle de Courcey rather more attention than was necessary, and it was distinctly displeasing to me."

"That settles it," replied Louis. "These papers stand. I cannot forego the honor of being uncle to such a nephew as yourself. I am proud of you, my dear Victor."

Here Louis rose and patted Monsieur de Latour patronizingly on the back.

"It is not your money that I desire—that you are more than welcome to—but to say to the world that I have such a nephew as yourself gives me the highest pleasure."

"Go to the devil!" bawled Monsieur de Latour, jumping up. "You are the most impudent, presumptuous scamp I ever saw in my life. I your nephew, indeed!"

"But I thought you wanted to appear young so as to win favor, perhaps, in Mademoiselle Julie's eyes."

"So I do, but not so infernally and ridiculously young as you would make me appear."

"Not at all. I might have a brother forty years older than myself, and you might be that brother's son."

"And I might elope with my great-grandfather's sister-in-law, but we are not talking about such things as that. What I mean to say is that this ridiculous mistake must be rectified. I am willing to adopt you as my nephew—in fact, I am rather pleased to be related to you, because I have learned to like you in spite of your assaults upon my ribs. I am willing to be your uncle, but I am not willing to be your nephew."

"My dear boy, the thing is done. It is signed, sealed and delivered. You are my nephew, and you can't help yourself. And remember that the arrangement carries with it the authority of a parent—for example, you cannot marry anybody without my consent. Our laws, you know, are very specific on that point."

"Oh, yes, I know, but you are talking nonsense."

"Am I? Then try to contravene my authority and see what will happen!"

Monsieur de Latour glared at Louis. And just then the door opened and Julie entered, looking, if possible, prettier than ever.

"Now," she said to Monsieur de Latour, "I am ready to do anything you ask me—that is, for half an hour, when I expect the dressmaker—then I shall have to leave you."

"Certainly," answered Monsieur de Latour, laughing sardonically. "Between the hairdresser and the dressmaker, you may occasionally descend to assist me. Thank you very much, mademoiselle. I am indebted to you, I think, for the present piece of work."

He got up and, in his wrath taking Julie sternly by the arm, he pointed with an accusing finger at the document.

"Do you see," he thundered, "that through that little peculiarity of yours

by which you always get one word wrong—”

“But only one word, monsieur, and then always a very small one.”

“Yes, I know, but big enough to do the business. Here I see that instead of Victor Louis de Latour adopting Louis Victor de Latour, it is completely turned around, and this young scapegrace has adopted me. Do you understand?”

In his wrath Monsieur de Latour's voice had risen to a roar, but Julie, glancing at the paper and then at Louis, burst into a ripple of laughter.

“Oh, how amusing!” she cried. “It is the most delightful thing I ever heard of. Did I make that mistake?”

“You did!” shouted Monsieur de Latour, in his wrath actually shaking Julie's arm.

“Well, what's the harm?” she asked, breathless with the shaking and laughing still more. “You are just as much a de Latour of the Chateau of Montplasir, monsieur, as you ever were. I thought that was the great point.”

Monsieur de Latour threw her down into a chair as if she had been a parcel, and strode up and down the room.

“My dear Victor,” said Louis soothingly, “compose yourself. Have confidence in me, your uncle, and believe that everything that I shall do will be with an eye for your advantage. If you should require me to give back the three hundred thousand francs—”

“Oh, yes, give them back, indeed!” cried Monsieur de Latour, going and standing before Louis. “You can afford to give them back because you practically have the control of all my property.”

“I sha'n't interfere with that, my boy,” replied Louis. “I think you know how to manage your money matters very much better than I do. It is only your personal conduct in which I shall concern myself, and, by the way, I think it would be best for you to dispense with Mademoiselle de Courcey's services as private secretary.”

“What have you to do with my private secretary?”

“Everything. I am your legal guard-

ian, and I cannot allow you to continue what I thought from the first a very indiscreet arrangement. So, mademoiselle, I shall be pleased myself to engage your services at the same figure my nephew paid you, if you will accept it.”

“Certainly!” cried Julie, jumping up.

“But I shall stipulate,” continued Louis gravely, “that you are not to do any writing for me. I can't take the risk.”

“Sixteen vats of soap spoiled!” interjected Monsieur de Latour, throwing himself into a chair.

“My dear Victor,” said Louis, “would you oblige me by allowing me a few minutes' private conversation with Mademoiselle Julie?”

“What?” screamed Monsieur de Latour.

“A few minutes' private interview is what I ask.”

“Not under any circumstances.”

Monsieur de Latour was so beside himself with rage that he could not keep still, but, jumping up from his chair, bounced up and down the room.

“Then, mademoiselle,” said Louis, “I must ask you to step out with me upon the terrace for a moment.”

“Mademoiselle, I forbid you to go,” cried Monsieur de Latour.

But to this Julie paid no attention whatever, and followed Louis through the glass door that opened on the terrace. Once out in the clear and brilliant sunshine, Louis whispered in her ear:

“Did you do it on purpose?”

And Julie whispered back:

“Yes, yes, yes!”

“And was it because his consent was necessary to your marriage?”

Julie nodded her head and gave Louis her bewitching side glance.

“Very well, he shall remain my nephew until he has consented to our marriage.”

Julie gave Louis another side glance. Monsieur de Latour, within the room, saw it, and a flood of light poured in upon him. He dashed out upon the terrace, almost knocking them over.

“Oh, I see how it is,” he cried.

"You two are in a conspiracy against me. You"—pointing to Louis—"want to marry Mademoiselle de Courcey."

"Oh, no," replied Louis, "I want to marry Mademoiselle de Brésac." And taking Julie's hand he placed it within his arm.

Slowly the truth dawned upon Monsieur de Latour. He struck his forehead.

"I see it all," he said. "It is a trick. You are Julie de Brésac. Strange I never suspected it before. But that old gadabout, your aunt, put you up to it, no doubt. Very well, all I have to say is that, under your respected father's will, my consent is necessary to your marriage, and you won't get it to marry my nephew."

"Your uncle, you mean," interposed Louis.

"Very well, very well," cried Monsieur de Latour, walking off, quivering with rage. "You will see how it will turn out."

Louis followed him.

"Now, my dear nephew," he said in a pacifying tone, "don't let us, with guests in the house, have a family row—these things are very bad form. It has never been the custom of the de Latours to do such things, and if you wish to prove yourself a genuine de Latour you must follow the traditions of the house. Now, it isn't necessary to say how things really stand—I am willing to let you pose as my uncle, provided you show me the respect which is due me. So let us agree to say nothing about this, but I will have no interference between Mademoiselle Julie and myself."

Monsieur de Latour paused and reflected for a whole minute.

"Perhaps you know," he said, "that the Comtesse de Beauregard's consent is necessary, as well as mine, for any one to marry Julie."

"I believe so, but that is very easily won. Just let me go on a gigantic lark and the old lady will consent at once."

"Yes, but suppose she should marry? She might marry me, you know!"

"That will make our relationship still more interesting. You would be my nephew and at the same time you would be my uncle."

"Don't talk nonsense. What I mean is that I intend to checkmate you and that headstrong girl yonder."

"But to marry Madame de Beauregard you would have to lead a very dissipated life, and then I should be in a position to check you."

"Oh, it's all a confounded muddle," cried Monsieur de Latour, "but I intend to block your game, young man, with Julie, and you see if I don't."

While this turmoil was taking place in one part of the chateau a like one was occurring in another part of it. Just as luncheon was over General Granier's card was brought in, and Madame de Beauregard insisted upon the rest of the party going with her to the orangery. There they found General Granier, who began to entertain them with anecdotes of some of his most notorious escapades during the Second Empire, varied with the recital of some startling indiscretions about three months before. His stories were really amusing, and even Mademoiselle Chéri laughed at them; but Mélanie, much scandalized, maintained a shocked silence, and Eugène de Contiac unconsciously did the same.

When General Granier had finished a story of having kissed a dowager duchess in mistake for her daughter-in-law, a story which sent Madame de Beauregard into convulsions of mirth, she suddenly looked around and caught Eugène in the act of handing a book to Mélanie. Madame de Beauregard seized it and read aloud the title, "Sermons and Discourses, by Bossuet." From screams of laughter the old lady suddenly went into a temper, and, giving Eugène a smart clip over the head with the book of sermons, she cried wrathfully:

"I will teach you to be reading sermons in good company! And what's this?"

A sheet of paper fluttered out, which the old lady caught deftly and read aloud:

"DEAREST MÉLANIE:

"Don't believe for one moment that my heart or my inclinations are in the dissipations which I sometimes follow. It is all the doing of my intolerable old aunt and that old rip, General Granier. My darling, as soon as my aunt is dead and I can follow my own inclinations you will have no fault to find with me. Even without your influence, dearest, I would wish to live a pious and God-fearing life. How much more so when you encourage me in those religious observances of which I am deprived! But when my old aunt dies, dearest, and we can be married, rest assured that I shall lead with you a life of prayer and piety, with sermons for our only literature and church-going our dissipation. My aunt has not a bad heart, and let us unite in prayer, dear one, that she may mend her ways.

"Devotedly yours,
"EUGÈNE DE CONTIAC."

This was a letter calculated to exasperate a much milder person than Madame de Beauregard, and the old lady, although in general good-tempered, as most old reprobates are, was kindled into wrath. She sat up and whirled around in her chair, and actually danced with rage.

"So you are planning to be pious when I am dead and buried!" she shrieked, shaking the unlucky letter in poor Eugène's pallid face. "Very well, then, you and your saintly friend here can be pious on nothing at all. You and this sanctimonious minx will unite in prayer for me! Just let me catch you at it—that's all I ask! Oh, if I had but a man in my family, he should have every franc I possess! Monsieur Bertoux," she cried, turning to the silent advocate, who saw a good fee staring him in the face for making another will for Madame de Beauregard, "I desire you this minute to make another will for me."

At this Monsieur Bertoux quietly took out some sheets of legal-looking paper.

"Here, madame," he said resignedly, "I always keep myself prepared, and I knew when I arrived here yesterday and saw the situation of affairs that I should be called upon to make a will for you before the week was out. Will you, as usual when you cut Monsieur de Contiac off, give your property to found a hospital for cats and dogs?"

"Yes," answered Madame de Beauregard, "except one hundred thousand francs to General Granier, as the last man with red blood in him who is left alive in France. He deserves a legacy and he shall have it, for knowing how to enjoy himself as a man should."

General Granier bowed to the ground and said gallantly:

"I hope, madame, that I shall never come into the possession of that legacy. I should be far more pleased if you would consider the proposition which I have made to you at intervals for the last forty years." Here the general put his hand to his heart and winked sentimentally at Madame de Beauregard.

"Marry you, you mean?" cried Madame de Beauregard. "Well, I have been considering it for forty years, as you say. But meanwhile I intend to punish my nephew—not that he appears to have a drop of my blood in him—so, Monsieur Bertoux, will you please to come into the grand salon with me, and we will arrange this matter. And I beg to inform you, mademoiselle," she added to the shrinking Mélanie, "that you may marry my nephew any time you like, and you will get a pious husband—and I could not desire any worse punishment, for pious husbands are a terrible bore. I had one myself and I don't propose to have another of that sort."

Madame de Beauregard marched off to the salon, escorted by Monsieur Bertoux and General Granier. Mademoiselle Chéri, Mélanie and Eugène remained in the orangery. Eugène, like most men who have just lost a half-million francs, looked a little frightened. Not so Mélanie. Extending her hand to him, she said with a kind of timid boldness:

"I care nothing for the fortune you have lost. It is you that I love, and when I feel that you have perhaps secured your eternal salvation by giving up that money I feel as if we should render thanks for losing it."

Eugène was scarcely then equal to rendering thanks for the loss of a half-million francs, but he was sincerely in love with Mélanie, and her disinterested

love touched him deeply. And he could tell her with perfect truth, as he did, that any loss of money was trifling so long as he retained her love.

Mademoiselle Chéri, who was the most indulgent person in the world to lovers and children, considerately left the orangery and was walking up and down the parapet of the terrace, leaving Eugène and Mélanie practically alone under the green shade of the orange trees. The two stood hand in hand and were forgetful of all the world but themselves. It seemed to them but a few minutes that they were alone together, while it was really a half-hour.

Their Elysian dream was rudely interrupted by Monsieur de Latour bouncing in upon them. Monsieur de Latour had been very much tried that day, and this last straw had brought his wrath to the boiling pitch. So he bawled at the two young culprits:

"Well, I have just seen Madame de Beauregard, and she is having another will made as fast as Monsieur Bertoux can write it, and so you have lost by your folly five hundred thousand francs which you could have easily retained. What do a few escapades and a little dissipation matter with half a million francs to be gained by it? But no, you want to thank God that you are better than other men, and you have been rightly served by Madame de Beauregard, and all I have to say is that you are to give up immediately any idea you have of marrying my niece. Half an hour ago you were a very desirable parti—now you are not a parti in a marriageable sense at all. Mélanie, let go of his hand!"

But Mélanie, as even a dove strives to defend her love, only held on the more to Eugène's hand.

"Would you have me give him up because he strives to be good and pleases me thereby?" she asked, trembling.

"I certainly should!" roared Monsieur de Latour.

But Eugène, not to be less courageous than Mélanie, replied firmly:

"Mademoiselle, although I cannot

ask you now to share my poverty, rest assured that I am yours forever."

"But, Eugène," said Mélanie timidly, "perhaps by waiting—my uncle cannot really mean to separate us, knowing how much we love each other."

"But I *shall* separate you!" shouted Monsieur de Latour, "and you will see, young man, whether I do or not."

At this Louis's voice was heard over Monsieur de Latour's shoulder.

"My dear nephew," he said, "what kind of language is this that you are using? I am simply shocked at you. Would you part two young hearts that beat only for each other?"

"Certainly I should," angrily responded Monsieur de Latour, wheeling around on Louis.

"Luckily," said Louis coolly, "it is not in your power. Under the articles of my adoption of you as a nephew you cannot do anything of this character without my consent, and I don't intend to allow you to separate Mademoiselle Mélanie and Monsieur de Contiac. The fact is, Victor, you have no experience with the master passion—you are dealing with an unknown quantity when you try to regulate the emotions of two young hearts. It is fortunate that you are enough under my control to prevent you from interfering either with Mademoiselle Mélanie's love affair or with the tender attachment which I feel for Mademoiselle Julie and which she does me the honor to accept."

"Do you mean to say, you upstart—?" spluttered Monsieur de Latour.

"Come, come, Victor, that kind of language is totally unsuited to our relationship. Remember, you are my nephew."

"The devil I am! It's the most arrant nonsense I ever heard in my life."

"Will you go and ask Monsieur Bertoux what he thinks of it?"

"Oh, I know it's all legal, but it's simply maddening. But"—addressing Mélanie and Eugène in a menacing manner—"don't you two young hypocrites take this gentleman too seriously

about this business. First let us see how it will work."

"I," said Louis, with much dignity, "advise you, mademoiselle, and you, Monsieur de Contiac, to take it with the utmost seriousness, as I mean to enforce all the rights of my position. And among other things, I apologize for the behavior of my nephew. You are our joint guests, and I beg you will forget everything that has been said. My nephew has not yet learned the lesson of self-control, but I hope to teach it to him. We shall all have until five o'clock to compose ourselves, and by that time I hope my nephew will have arrived at a better frame of mind. Come, Victor," and with that he seized Monsieur de Latour by the arm and dragged him off, spluttering:

"It's maddening, simply maddening!"

Monsieur de Latour, shaking himself free, retired to his own room to ponder over the topsy-turvy condition of affairs. The more he pondered the more puzzling the situation seemed to him. Julie, he realized, was out of his reach, and the vision of a young and pretty girl as his partner for the rest of his life seemed less attractive when he reflected upon the complications that Julie's youth and inexperience had brought upon him. His association with Madame de Beauregard, and with the persons of high-sounding names to whom she had introduced him, including even the semi-royal duke during that alarming experience in the auto-car, had fostered extremely his natural taste for aristocratic society, and it really seemed to him as if he were throwing himself away in marrying Mademoiselle Cheri.

Just at that moment he glanced out of his window and saw a superb carriage with a ducal crest upon it coming into the courtyard, and from it descended the semi-royal duke. The old lady herself appeared on the terrace to greet her visitor. He was a portly, red-faced old gentleman, apparently of the same vintage as Madame de Beauregard herself.

Monsieur de Latour, watching the

scene from his window, felt his chest swell at the thought of entertaining so distinguished a guest as the semi-royal duke. It is true that they had been upon the auto-car expedition together, but Monsieur de Latour had been so frightened on that occasion as they whizzed and banged along that he really remembered very little about the duke.

Madame de Beauregard, who treated dukes and costermongers alike, received this particular duke with great courtesy and likewise much familiarity, and began to pour out to him the story of her grievances against Eugène de Contiac and modern men in general, at which the duke chuckled in a semi-royal way.

"Here," cried Madame de Beauregard, snapping her bright old eyes, "I am the guest of Monsieur de Latour, a soap-boiling man, but I like him. There is not half as much difference as people think between you people, with sixteen quarterings, and a soap-boiler after he is washed and combed and well dressed. And this old soap-boiler has some spirit in him—I suppose he might be considered quite a desperate character in these milk-and-water days. But he isn't a patch on you, my dear duke, for example, nor on General Granier, and when you are dead there will be no more men at all."

The semi-royal duke grinned, and remarked that he had no intention of dying yet a while.

"Nor have I," cried Madame de Beauregard. "I expect to spend the season of 1940 at Dinard. Do you remember, my dear duke, the season of 1860 at Dauville? Oh, they were days then when one lived! We had no rheumatism, we had all our own teeth, and we could go the pace by night as well as by day."

"My dear madame," said the duke, who really had quite a gentlemanly air when he chose, "you are today as young in feelings, in energy and in looks as you were in 1860."

"Oh, you old rogue," cried Madame de Beauregard, playfully prodding the

duke with her fan, "how can you tell such taradiddles? Well, I can't say that you are as young as you were in 1860, but I will say that you have more life in you than ten young men of today."

Monsieur de Latour, watching and listening from his bedroom window, turned pale. The idea of such language and such prodding applied to any man with a ducal title was bad enough, but to a duke who figured in the *Almanach de Gotha!*

"There is something in blood, after all," thought Monsieur de Latour, watching Madame de Beauregard's ease and sprightliness; "but I believe that woman would chuck President Loubet under the chin, and tweak the Pope's ear, if she wanted to."

The duke, however, who had known Madame de Beauregard for sixty years, settled himself quite comfortably to hear the present generation abused and his own lauded.

"The fact is, madame," he said, "the young people of the present day are too correct by half."

"Quite right you are," replied Madame de Beauregard with emphasis. "Now, there is my nephew, Eugène de Contiac. You know my troubles with that young man. Well, now he is behaving worse than ever. He is in love with the soap-boiler's niece, who is a shade more pious than Eugène. The minx actually tells him that she would marry him without a franc if he continues pious, and won't look at him if he doesn't, even if I give him half a million francs. But my mind is made up that no godly young man shall get any of my money. In 1860 there weren't any pious young men, were there, duke?"

Madame de Beauregard rattled on in her shrill, high-pitched voice for the benefit of everybody within half a mile, and Monsieur de Latour, who could not help hearing, listened to the names of princes, kings and even emperors handled in the most familiar manner, getting the general impression that in 1860 Madame de Beauregard and the semi-royal duke were engaged in one

long, loud and uproarious romp with half the royal personages in Europe. But this was not without its effect on the retired soap-boiler, and his mind returned to the half-formed scheme of marrying the old lady herself. The duke paid a long visit, and by the time he went away dusk was falling.

In spite of the exciting occurrences of the day the whole party met at dinner with outward composure and even gaiety. Monsieur de Latour, however, was considerably annoyed by the tone of paternal authority which Louis adopted toward him, and by the gibes of Madame de Beauregard at the situation which had been reversed.

"So it was that little baggage Julie who did it all?" the old lady chuckled, indicating Julie, who sat at the table and looked as innocent as the cat which had eaten the canary. "To tell you the truth, Monsieur de Latour, I don't believe she made the mistake in the name through inadvertence. I think that she meant to put you in Monsieur Louis de Latour's power."

"But it is preposterous!" burst out Monsieur de Latour.

"If you think so," replied Louis coolly, "try to break the arrangement and see where you are."

And then everybody at the table laughed, and Monsieur de Latour, boiling and spluttering with rage, yet had to control himself and smile a ghastly smile.

And so the old lady had countenanced the trick his ward had played upon him! But he still held on to the three hundred thousand francs, and there would be no question of Julie and Louis marrying without it. It seemed to Monsieur de Latour that he had Louis in quite as much of a hole as Louis had him.

But the visit of the semi-royal duke made a great impression upon Monsieur de Latour, and he began to consider seriously how he might contrive to marry Madame de Beauregard. He concluded that the best and only way was to prove himself a roué of the wild-est description, and began to turn over in his mind plans to that effect.

As a preliminary Monsieur de Latour invited the whole party, including Monsieur Bertoux, to remain for the rest of the month at the chateau, and in this Louis cordially concurred, and they all accepted. Madame de Beauregard knew everybody worth knowing at Dinard, and the old lady, in spite of her peculiarities, was much sought after. The terrace of the chateau was gay with guests every afternoon at tea-time. Mademoiselle Cheri and Mélanie were very well pleased at the opportunity of seeing a phase of society hitherto unknown in their secluded and provincial lives, but Mademoiselle Cheri, unlike Monsieur de Latour, was not in the least impressed by it.

Duchesses, princesses and countesses, with the gentlemen in their train, came every afternoon to the terrace on Madame de Beauregard's invitation, for the old lady's idea of life was one long, unintermittent lark. But Monsieur de Latour was so dazzled by the names of the people, to say nothing of their equipages and servants, that his head was completely turned. To be the head of the house of de Latour had seemed to him, the month before, to be the acme of distinction, but now he longed to be the Comte de Beauregard, a title which he would acquire if he succeeded in marrying Madame de Beauregard and could acquire the estate.

The only serious rival he had was General Granier, with his extremely interesting leg and his repertoire of larks and escapades, and a large assortment of delightfully scandalous stories. Monsieur de Latour could in no way pretend to rival him in these particulars. How tame and correct seemed his life at Brionville! He grew positively ashamed of its tameness and correctness, and longed to prove that he had in him the making of a dreadfully dissipated character.

Moreover, he was checked at every turn by Louis, who, with the coolest assumption and most ineffable impudence, undertook to treat him like a schoolboy. It was in vain that he threatened Louis with the loss of the

prospective three hundred thousand francs and the promise of withholding consent from Louis's marriage to Julie. Louis snapped his fingers at the three hundred thousand francs, which he declared to be a mere trifle compared with Julie's love. And as for the question of Monsieur de Latour's consent—ah, there was a complication indeed! Louis had studied carefully the legal aspects of his adoption of Monsieur de Latour instead of Monsieur de Latour's adoption of him, and the threat of attempting to enforce them and compelling Monsieur de Latour to appear in court as his adopted nephew made the old gentleman extremely uncomfortable. Louis absolutely undertook to cut down Monsieur de Latour's allowance of champagne at dinner and cigars afterward, tried to force him to go to bed at ten o'clock and urged him to lead as correct a life as that of Eugène de Contiac.

Monsieur de Latour, turning these things over in his mind, determined to make a break for liberty, not only for his own satisfaction but as a means of recommending himself to Madame de Beauregard, and he thought:

"If I can get that milksop of a nephew of hers to come with me and make a man of him, the Comtesse de Beauregard will be sure to look upon me with an eye of favor, and perhaps, as he and Mélanie are determined to be married some time or other, I can secure for him the half-million francs which Madame de Beauregard promises to give him. And after all, what Eugène said in that unlucky letter about being as pious as he pleased after Madame de Beauregard is dead and gone is perfectly true, and Mélanie can have that happiness to which every woman aspires—that of reforming a man."

Filled with these notions Monsieur de Latour, one morning about a fortnight after the arrival of his guests at the chateau, carried off to his bedroom Eugène de Contiac, and, after double-locking the door, seated himself for a confidential interview. Eugène himself had drooped somewhat in spirits,

as a man will who has just lost half a million francs, and had begun to consider if there were not some means by which he could get his legacy, have his allowance restored and still keep on terms with Mélanie, having a fixed determination to become pious as soon as he dared to be. Monsieur de Latour, surmising what was passing in Eugène's mind, unfolded a plan to him.

"My dear fellow," said he, "I think you made a mistake in throwing away that half-million francs. It does not seem impossible that you should have your legacy and your allowance restored and marry my niece, for she certainly fancies you—God knows why! Now, Madame de Beauregard can't live forever."

"Oh, yes, she will," groaned Eugène. "She is good for forty years yet. She will live to bury all of us and be skipping around here until she meets the fate of the old lady who died at the age of one hundred and ten of a fall from a cherry tree."

"Well," said Monsieur de Latour, going closer and dropping his voice to a mysterious whisper, "perhaps—ahem!—there are certain secrets of the heart—it's rather embarrassing to speak of these things—but—it is possible that I may become a candidate for Madame de Beauregard's hand."

"Marry her, do you mean?" cried Eugène, falling back in his chair. "Good heavens! If I were in your place I would rather marry a whole circus than my aunt. Yet she is not a bad woman; but for pure friskiness there never was anything like her."

"I agree with you perfectly, but I am a little frisky myself. Now, I have a proposition to make to you. Suppose you and I go to Paris for a week for a little lark of the sort Madame de Beauregard would like. I believe it would certainly end in her restoring your legacy and allowance, and might—ahem!—incline her favorably to listen to the proposition which I am contemplating making her. If only General Granier, with that infernal leg of his, were out of the way! But she seems never tired of listening to stories

of what he can do with that leg—shoot rabbits, play cards and actually play the piano with it. And he eighty years of age if he is a day! That man and Madame de Beauregard have found the fountain of eternal youth and friskiness."

"But Mélanie?" asked Eugène. "She is devoted to me now; but if I should spend such a week in Paris as you desire I am sure she would never speak to me."

"Oh, yes, she would. She would have the pleasure of reforming you again, and that is a joy which a woman cannot repeat too often. No, my dear fellow, don't think that for a moment. Go down on your knees to Mélanie, tell her you are sorry for what you have done, then—get up and do it again. That's what women all like."

There was something enticing to Eugène in all this, and after an hour's urgent representation he finally consented to make the visit to Paris with Monsieur de Latour. That night at dinner Monsieur de Latour announced their intended excursion.

"And I promise you," he said to Madame de Beauregard, who sat at his right, "that when we come back we shall have some tales to tell!"

VI

ONE week from the day that Monsieur de Latour and Eugène left for Paris they were sitting in Monsieur de Latour's study in the Chateau of Montplasir, absolute wrecks of their former selves. Monsieur de Latour was the color of a mustard-plaster, his eyes were bloodshot, his hand trembled, and as he lay back in an arm-chair he seemed scarcely able to raise his head. Eugène, sitting at the other end of the room, leaned forward, supporting his aching head upon his shaking hands. At intervals a slight sigh burst from him, which was answered by a loud groan from Monsieur de Latour. Presently Eugène spoke in a scarcely audible voice.

"I wouldn't spend such another

week as the last for half a million francs."

"And I," groaned Monsieur de Latour from the other end of the room, "would give half a million francs for another head and a new stomach."

There was a silence after this, broken by Eugène saying in a sepulchral voice, "Oh, my head!"

To which Monsieur de Latour responded in tones of agony, "Oh, my head!"

Then there was a longer silence still.

"Do you know how much it cost?" asked Eugène.

"No," replied Monsieur de Latour. "All I know is I used up all the cheques in my cheque-book, and when I got to the station I didn't have enough money to pay the cabman to bring us out here." And he groaned dismaly.

While they sat in gloom and miserable silence the door suddenly flew open and in bounded Madame de Beauregard, carrying a newspaper in her hand.

"Oh, you two darlings!" she cried, blowing a kiss to Monsieur de Latour and throwing her arm around Eugène's aching head, "how delightfully you have been behaving! It has been in the newspapers for three days past. I was so pleased that I made Monsieur Bertoux not only make me a new will, but directed him to pay to my nephew's credit in bank one-half of his legacy, that is, two hundred and fifty thousand francs, in cash."

Eugène felt feebly in his pocket.

"Yes, I believe I did get a letter or something from Monsieur Bertoux, but I was not in a state to understand it exactly. Here it is, I believe."

He took the letter out and read it—a brief communication saying that Monsieur Bertoux had, by the direction of Madame de Beauregard, placed two hundred and fifty thousand francs to Eugène's credit at his Paris banker's.

"And now," cried Madame de Beauregard, shaking him, "aren't you perfectly delighted?"

Eugène shook his head dolefully.

"If you had my head!" he said.

Madame de Beauregard shrieked with laughter at this.

"And how about your head, monsieur?" she asked.

"It feels about the size of the Eiffel Tower," gasped Monsieur de Latour.

This delighted the old lady still more.

"Now," she cried, "I will tell you what the newspapers say. It is all about your visit to the races. They say that the two of you went out, escorting nineteen ballet-girls, and before you left you had paid for one hundred and twenty-seven bottles of champagne, and that two of the young ladies—he! he!—gave you, monsieur, a footbath in champagne—ha! ha!"

"Yes, they rolled my trousers up to my knees, and before I got through I was wet to my shirt with champagne."

"Why, that almost makes me fall in love with you! And then the police came along—"

"I wish they had come before," murmured Eugène sadly.

"—and tried to arrest you, and the ballet-girls smuggled you and Eugène out of the way, and you jumped into a twenty-thousand-franc racing machine—"

"It cost me thirty thousand francs before I got through with it," interjected Monsieur de Latour.

"—and ran it into a ditch, and smashed it all to bits, and you fought the police—"

"Look at the back of my neck!" said Monsieur de Latour, displaying a number of bumps and bruises.

"—and got yourselves arrested, and by some sort of hocus-pocus—"

"It was ten thousand francs' worth of hocus-pocus," said Eugène in a tired voice.

"—managed to go free. And you sat up all the next night playing cards and losing money—"

"We did that for six nights," said Monsieur de Latour, "and we weren't playing cards all the time. I lost twelve thousand francs on a bet that

more flies would alight on my lump of sugar than on another man's. But we played cards, too."

"In short," cackled the old lady, "you must have had a most delightful week."

This remark was received in silence. After a pause Monsieur de Latour said:

"It seems to me about ten weeks since we left this place for Paris."

"And remember," cried Madame de Beauregard, chucking Monsieur de Latour under the chin, "that's the kind of a life you will be expected to lead all the time if I conclude to marry you."

At which Monsieur de Latour shook his head in a manner which did not indicate unmitigated joy at the prospect.

"And," continued Madame de Beauregard, "you have succeeded in making General Granier insanely jealous. He hasn't money to go the pace as you do—in fact, he never had. He makes no secret of his determination to run you out of the field, because Granier, poor darling, really wants to marry me."

Monsieur de Latour at that moment would have run out of the field without any assistance whatever from General Granier.

Madame de Beauregard remained half an hour longer in the company of her host and nephew, getting the particulars of what she called their charming week in Paris, out of the two unfortunates. Every detail of agony they gave delighted her more and more. Their encounters with the police, their sleepless nights and exciting days, their expeditions, their falls into gutters and being dragged out again, their encounters with cabmen and chauffeurs, ballet-dancers and the like, gave her exquisite pleasure, and when she skipped out it was with the assurance to Monsieur de Latour that she really felt herself falling in love with him, and was afraid to stay longer for fear she should kiss him against his will.

As she left the room a servant appeared with a message from Louis, which he delivered with much hesitation. It was a request that Monsieur

de Latour should wait upon him in the salon.

"Go to the devil!" was Monsieur de Latour's response.

In a few minutes Louis appeared, and going up to the great chair where Monsieur de Latour, as limp as a rag, lay, said to him in a voice of stern reproof:

"My dear Victor, your conduct in Paris is known to me, and I have not language strong enough to condemn it. What do you suppose my feelings are, as your uncle, when I hear of these outrageous performances, dragging the name of de Latour into the newspapers, and misconducting yourself in general?"

Monsieur de Latour felt very ill and disinclined to exert himself, but the tone of admonition on Louis's part roused the old gentleman to a pitch of great anger.

"Come, now, young man," he said, "you may stop this tomfoolery. Whatever I have done, I don't choose to be corrected by a youngster like yourself."

"Remember," replied Louis in a voice of awful warning, "I am your uncle."

"The devil you are! Well, uncle or no uncle, I propose to do as I like, and if I like to have a little lark in Paris——"

"A little lark!" Louis threw his hands up.

"—in conjunction with my young friend, de Contiac, here, who, I must say, incited me to most of the gaieties in which we indulged, I shall do it without any reference to you or anybody else."

At this poor Eugène raised his pallid face from his hands, in which it had sunk, and said in a sepulchral voice:

"I incited you to gaieties?"

"Well, well," answered Monsieur de Latour testily, "it doesn't make any difference—we incited each other."

"I wish I could believe you," answered Louis, "but I am sure that you were chiefly responsible. As a result of your improper conduct, your niece, Mademoiselle Mélanie, is in the very deepest distress, chiefly on account of

Monsieur de Contiac's share in your performances, and she demands an interview, a final one, with Monsieur de Contiac. She awaits you," continued Louis, turning to Eugène, "in the salon with Mademoiselle Chéri."

Eugène tried to rise from his chair, but sank back exhausted.

"I can't move," he said. "I thought I would never reach the chateau alive. I believe three days more of the racket would have killed me."

"Then," promptly said Louis, "Mademoiselle Mélanie and Mademoiselle Chéri will no doubt come to you here when they know the circumstances."

At this poor Eugène absolutely burst into tears, while Louis, ringing the bell, directed the servant to request Mademoiselle Chéri and Mademoiselle Mélanie to do him the favor of coming to Monsieur de Latour's study. While awaiting them Louis improved the opportunity by lecturing Monsieur de Latour on the impropriety of his conduct, a proceeding which lashed Monsieur de Latour to fury.

In a few minutes Mademoiselle Chéri appeared with Mélanie. The poor girl was dissolved in tears, and it was a pitiable sight as she sank into a chair near Eugène, both of them weeping bitterly. Between her sobs Mélanie could only say, "All is over between us—all is over between us."

"But he has two hundred and fifty thousand francs, mademoiselle," put in Louis, whose goodness of heart made him wish to befriend the unhappy lovers. "Monsieur Bertoux, who secretly sympathizes with you, induced Madame de Beauregard to let him deposit the money to your credit in bank. The old lady was so pleased with your indiscretions, monsieur, and so confident you would never reform, that she directed Monsieur Bertoux to do it, so you may reform and have the two hundred and fifty thousand francs too."

"He will never reform," wailed Mélanie, "and we must part. Oh,

Eugène, how could you be guilty of such wickedness?"

For answer Eugène could only sob and point his finger at Monsieur de Latour. The presence of Mademoiselle Chéri was peculiarly unpleasant to Monsieur de Latour at that moment. She was entirely too outspoken, and she proceeded on the spot to treat Monsieur de Latour to what ladies call giving a man a piece of their minds.

"Monsieur," she said severely, "no one can approve of your conduct in Paris. I thought I knew the extent to which folly would lead you, but I never dreamed of anything like your preposterous conduct during the past week. You have brought great distress upon your niece and mortification upon all your friends."

This was too much for Monsieur de Latour. It was bad enough to be hectored over by Louis, but Seline Chéri, a soap-boiler's daughter! He struggled to his feet.

"Mademoiselle," he replied in a tone of equal severity, "I think I understand the animus from which you speak. You have perhaps observed that the Comtesse de Beauregard looks upon me with an eye of favor, and you probably disapprove of it."

"Quite so," answered Mademoiselle Chéri frankly.

"Ah! Perhaps you recall the time, mademoiselle, when I was an aspirant for your own hand."

"Yes," replied Mademoiselle Chéri, "and I will say to you, now that we are both old enough to speak frankly, that but for the obligation I felt to take care of my father in his declining years, I might have married you, Victor de Latour. You were then a worthy and estimable citizen, a good man and an excellent soap-boiler. If you had continued as such the time might have come when both of us, remembering our early association and feeling the need of friendship and companionship in our old age, would have married; but it is impossible now."

"Thank you, mademoiselle," replied Monsieur de Latour. "The pain

of my rejection is very much mitigated by the fact that I have not made you an offer."

"I know it," calmly answered Mademoiselle Cheri. "We are speaking plainly, as plain people like ourselves do speak, and your fine-gentleman airs sit ridiculously on you, Victor."

This enraged Monsieur de Latour so much that he whirled around and plumped himself down into a chair, almost turning his back upon Mademoiselle Cheri, who remained placid though disapproving.

A long and painful silence ensued, which became so intolerable to Monsieur de Latour that he suddenly jumped up and rushed out of the room and into the salon. As he opened the door General Granier arose. Instead of his usual gay and cordial greeting, General Granier bowed stiffly and said:

"I am calling upon Madame de Beauregard."

Monsieur de Latour was in no state to remember the amenities of life. He fell, rather than sank, into a chair, and stretching his legs out ran his hands through his already rumpled hair, and then, forgetting General Granier's presence, said to himself:

"My head is very bad, and my stomach is worse, but those ballet-girls were pretty."

"You appear to plume yourself," said General Granier stiffly, "upon your performances in Paris last week. Let me tell you, my dear sir, they were not a patch upon what I used to do in the year '60."

"Oh, nonsense!" answered Monsieur de Latour. "You never had such a week in your life as I have had."

"Do you mean to impugn my word, monsieur?" asked General Granier, advancing and putting his right hand into his trousers pocket, and at the same time lifting up his right leg, which was a habit of his.

"Come, now," said Monsieur de Latour, shying off, "I don't like you to lift that leg up that way at me. It's a gun, and I know it, and it might be loaded."

"I always keep it loaded," snapped General Granier, "and if you wish to know just how effective it is, observe that flower-pot across the room."

He whirled around on his left leg, and lifting his right one at an angle of forty-five degrees, clicked the trigger in his pocket. The next instant the flower-pot tumbled over, smashed into bits.

"There, now," cried Monsieur de Latour, edging away, "I knew you were going to do something of the kind. I think you ought to be reported to the police for carrying that thing loaded all the time, and I am not sure it is not my duty to do it."

General Granier, twirling his moustache, backed out of the door.

"Monsieur de Latour," he said, "I don't understand your language to me this morning at all. I shall write you and ask a categorical explanation. Good morning!" And he disappeared.

Monsieur de Latour, lying back in his chair in much agitation, turned over in his mind the meaning of General Granier's remarks. But while meditating a drowsiness overcame him. He had not slept for a week, and in a few minutes his loud snores, which resembled the trumpeting of an elephant, resounded through the great room.

Monsieur de Latour slept peacefully. The morning grew to high noon, high noon to afternoon, and Monsieur de Latour had just begun to make up the arrears of sleep he had lost in Paris. He was roused by a knock at the door, and a footman entered with a note. Monsieur de Latour, more asleep than awake, drowsily opened it, but at the first word he sat bolt upright and became thoroughly alert. It was from General Granier, and ran thus:

MONSIEUR VICTOR LOUIS DE LATOUR:
I demand an explanation of your language to me this morning, and if the explanation is not forthcoming I shall expect that satisfaction which one gentleman accords another. I am, sir, etc.,

AUGUSTE GRANIER.

"Now, what the devil does that mean?" said Monsieur de Latour, reading the note over.

"It means," cried Julie's voice from

his shoulder, "that General Granier wants you to fight him."

Monsieur de Latour glanced up. Julie had entered noiselessly, and holding up her skirts daintily, was peering over his shoulder and reading the note in his hand.

"He will be very much disappointed then," replied Monsieur de Latour promptly. "I haven't the slightest notion of fighting him or anybody else. I am a peaceful, law-abiding citizen, and I don't propose to shed the blood of a fellow-citizen, or let anybody shed mine, if I can help it. So I shall immediately write General Granier."

"Won't you let me write it for you?" asked Julie sweetly, apparently in entire unconsciousness of the awful consequences which the note might involve.

"No," thundered Monsieur de Latour, "you have written enough notes for me. I shall write this myself."

Julie ran and fetched pen and ink, put them on the table, and Monsieur de Latour drew his chair up to it and attempted to write, but it was impossible. That week in Paris had upset his hand as much as it had his head and his stomach. He could not form a single letter.

"There," he cried, throwing down the pen, "you will have to write it for me, but be sure you don't make any mistakes."

"I shall take the greatest care," promptly replied Julie.

Then she wrote, Monsieur de Latour dictating slowly:

"GENERAL AUGUSTE GRANIER,

"MONSIEUR:

"I have received your letter, which I do not comprehend in the least; but I beg you will understand one point distinctly, and it is this—that I will not fight you, and this resolution will hold in any event. All arrangements between us must conform to that understanding. In this I am acting according to my conscience. I shall be glad to hear from you further, and meanwhile I am, etc.,

"VICTOR LOUIS DE LATOUR."

"Now," said Monsieur de Latour to Julie, "make me a copy of that document and be very exact."

"I will," responded Julie with her usual promptness.

And with many nibblings at the end of her pen, crossings out and interlineations, she finally succeeded in producing two fair copies of the letter exactly alike.

"And now let me read it," said Monsieur de Latour.

His vision was blurred, however, and his head muddled by the events of the past week in Paris, and the letter appeared to him exactly what he desired.

"Now," he said, with an accent of relief, "you may send it off, and I am going to bed. It is now three o'clock, and I don't wish to be disturbed until ten o'clock tomorrow morning."

Before retiring to his room, however, Monsieur de Latour had Julie address and seal the letter, and gave it himself to the footman. Ten minutes afterward he was snoring peacefully in his bedroom, every shade drawn, the room as dark as night, and he, as he said, with the arrears of six nights of sleep to make up.

In another room in the chateau was poor Eugène de Contiac, but there was no sleep for him. In addition to his mental perturbation, he became violently ill, and had to pay dearly for the champagne and cigars, to say nothing of the other dissipations of the week in Paris. Louis de Latour, with old Suzette to assist him, stood by and administered well-known remedies, consoling and encouraging him. At intervals of an hour or two Madame de Beauregard would flounce in, cackling with delight, and declare to Eugène that his physical condition showed that he had spent exactly such a week in Paris as a man should spend.

Eugène kept old Suzette trotting to Mélanie's room, to ask how the dear girl stood the recent developments in his conduct, and after every inquiry old Suzette came back with a doleful tale of Mademoiselle Mélanie weeping and wringing her hands and declaring that she and Eugène must part forever. At this Eugène wept copiously, and

this very much increased his mental and physical agony. There was no sleep for him that night. He lay awake, groaning and sighing, and telling Louis, as long as he would listen, that such a week in Paris was dear at any price.

The next morning at nine o'clock Monsieur de Latour was still slumbering peacefully when a tremendous rap was heard at his door. He mumbled a sleepy "Come in," and Louis entered. Monsieur de Latour had not adopted the modern fashions in men's attire for the night, and still clung to a huge cambric nightgown and a nightcap with a tassel at the top of it. It was this figure, sitting up in bed, which greeted Louis.

"My dear Victor," said Louis sternly, "see what further trouble you have been getting yourself into! Here is a letter which I have just taken the liberty of opening and reading."

"Opening and reading my letters!" bawled Monsieur de Latour.

"Certainly. After this I shall not only insist upon reading such letters of yours as come, but those that you write as well. My dear boy, you are not to be trusted—that is the state of the case."

Louis, throwing open the shutters and letting in the morning sun, handed the open letter to Monsieur de Latour to read. But again his shaking hand and uncertain vision prevented him, and Louis had to read the letter to him. It was from a representative of General Granier and read thus:

MONSIEUR VICTOR LOUIS DE LATOUR:

I am directed by my friend, General Granier, to inform you that he has received your letter of the twentieth of August containing your challenge; and I beg to say that I shall be glad to meet any appointment that you may make with a friend of yours to arrange the details of the meeting. Believe me, sir, with sentiments of the highest respect,

Very truly yours,
JEAN LE GALLIAN.

"But I didn't send him any challenge!" roared Monsieur de Latour. "Here is an exact copy of the note I sent General Granier."

He drew from under his pillow the fair copy which Julie had made him

and handed it to Louis. Louis read it aloud carefully, and when he came to the part in which Monsieur de Latour had instructed Julie to write "I will not fight," that young person had fallen into her usual mistake. One word was left out, only a little word, and it was "not," and it made Monsieur de Latour say "I will fight you, and this resolution will hold in any event."

Monsieur de Latour fell back on his pillows.

"I know what she will say," he said, with the calmness of despair; "that 'it was only one word, and such a little one!' Great God!"

"There is no way out of it," said Louis meditatively, "and besides that, as a member of the house of de Latour you must live up to our traditions. You must fight."

Monsieur de Latour remained silent for a full minute.

"But I sha'n't fight!" he said. "I have made up my mind not to, and I am not easily changed."

"But you must, my dear boy. As the head of the house I must insist that you shall do it."

"You may insist all you like, but I sha'n't."

"General Granier, as the challenged party, has the privilege of selecting weapons. I think it extremely likely that he will require that you will use a weapon fired with the leg, as he can do."

"Very well. I can fire a gun just as well with my leg as I can with my arm, but I don't intend to fire a gun at General Granier, nor to allow him to fire one at me."

"Such language is most unbecoming the name you bear, and I wish to say that I shall take the matter in my own hands and will act as your second and will arrange the details of the meeting," replied Louis.

Monsieur de Latour turned over in bed and pulled the covers up so that only the top of his nightcap was visible.

"Will you kindly draw the shade down," he said, "and leave me in peace? If General Granier wants to fight me, he will have to come into this

bedroom, for I have no intention of leaving it."

"You do not appear to appreciate the seriousness of the situation," said Louis, "nor the point of honor involved."

"Be careful to shut the door after you," answered Monsieur de Latour, "and don't let them bother me with any breakfast. The bottom of my stomach has dropped out completely and I can't eat anything, but I should like a little cognac and water at ten o'clock."

Louis gazed at him meditatively.

"You might as well lie here and sleep," he said. "Your hand seems to be pretty shaky, anyhow. I am sorry the chances are so against you, not being able to hold a weapon steady nor to see clearly."

"That makes not the least difference," said Monsieur de Latour, drawing the covers up still higher. "I am not going to fight. Good morning."

"At least," Louis replied, "you will have to be at the place of meeting. That I shall see to myself."

"You must then provide a wheeled chair," said Monsieur de Latour coolly, "because you will never get me there any other way—likewise handcuffs and leg irons."

"You will be there," said Louis determinedly, pulling down the shade and closing the door after him.

Monsieur de Latour, left alone in silence and darkness, began to revolve things in his mind. He had determined upon one thing, and that was to discharge Julie. Fascinating as she was, that unfortunate peculiarity of hers of always leaving out one word—small, it is true, but vital, and always bringing about a catastrophe—made her not only useless but exceedingly dangerous.

He had not mentioned to Louis the method of preventing the affair which had promptly flashed into his mind. He would simply inform the police. And then, turning over, he slumbered peacefully until about three o'clock, when he was again roused by Louis's entrance.

"It is all settled," said Louis cheerfully. "The meeting will take place tomorrow morning, at seven o'clock, in the wood that skirts the field a mile off by the side of the old windmill. And just as I knew, General Granier has selected as weapons a gun to be fired with the foot. Of course it will be very difficult for you, but I am familiar with firearms and I have rigged up a contrivance by which you can fire a gun with your foot. You might practice a little this afternoon, but my experience is that practice before a duel does no good but simply is a tax upon the nerves. And, as a matter of fact, I must say to you, my dear Victor, that I don't think you stand the least show of hitting General Granier."

"I quite agree with you," replied Monsieur de Latour. "Nothing would surprise me more."

"And as for General Granier hitting you—well, I don't think that he means to kill you, but I think that he means to inflict a slight wound, perhaps leaving a mark upon your scalp or taking the tip off your ear. But one can never tell." And here Louis shook his head dolefully.

Monsieur de Latour shivered a little at this, but nevertheless he had his own reasons for retaining his composure.

"At seven o'clock," he repeated, "in the wood that skirts the field a mile off by the side of the old windmill. Well, I sha'n't be there."

"You will be there," answered Louis firmly, "if I have, as you say, to provide a rolling chair and leg irons and handcuffs; but be there you will, because you are a de Latour."

"Good afternoon," said Monsieur de Latour in the same voice in which he had spoken in the morning. "Pull down the shade and shut the door after you."

Monsieur de Latour was able to eat the wing of a chicken that evening, and a little boiled rice, brought up to him at dinner-time. Before retiring for the night he had a couple of alarm clocks placed in his room, set so as to go off at five o'clock, for Monsieur de Latour had a scheme in his mind which he had

worked out during those long hours between sleeping and waking that he had spent in his room.

He had inquired about Eugène de Contiac and had been told that the poor young man was in the depths of physical and mental agony and unable to leave his bed.

Monsieur de Latour, having fixed upon his plan of procedure, thought that he would sleep soundly, but found himself mistaken.

VII

No matter how fixed one's determination may be not to fight, nor how promptly one means to inform the police, in a case like Monsieur de Latour's there are few men who can sleep upon such a matter. Monsieur de Latour was not one of them, and he lay awake and pitched and tossed until five o'clock.

For the first time a suspicion began to steal upon him that he was, perhaps, better off at Brionville, with his middle-class friends, than at the Chateau of Montplasir, with all of the smart people he had got about him, and with a semi-royal duke among the chateau's visitors. Then came the thought of Mademoiselle Cheri, quiet, middle-aged, middle class, like himself, and the vision seemed strangely attractive. It was chased away by the thought of the Comtesse de Beauregard and her kittenish old age, of the wild set of scapegrace octogenarians by which she was surrounded, and the prospect of leading a life like that of the last week in Paris, and Monsieur de Latour fell into a kind of panic.

"If I do get killed by that preposterous old fool with his outlandish leg," thought Monsieur de Latour, "it will be the fault of Madame de Beauregard. That woman will have been my murderer. But another week like the last in Paris I believe would kill me just as quickly as a bullet from General Granier's leg. However, he won't get me to stand up and be shot at—he may be sure of that."

Monsieur de Latour, having dressed himself noiselessly in the first flush of the summer morning, crept downstairs with the quietness of a burglar bent on murder and arson, and let himself out of a small side door.

He struck out at a smart gait for the town, and making straight for the police station, entered and demanded to see the commissary. He was informed that the commissary was at home asleep, but the policeman on duty very civilly offered to do what he could for Monsieur de Latour. The policeman was a pleasant-faced fellow of about thirty years, entirely too young, so Monsieur de Latour determined, to be trusted with such a serious affair as was about to be brought before him. But he at once plunged into the matter.

"Monsieur," he said, "I wish to have a person, probably known to you, General Granier, arrested for making threats against my life." And then he poured out his story.

But either his mind had not yet recovered from the strain of his week in Paris, or the policeman was stupid, because after talking straight ahead for twenty minutes, rising and gesticulating, the policeman appeared to be thoroughly confused.

"Do I understand, monsieur," the policeman asked very politely, "that you demand the arrest of General Granier without any proof of the charges you make against him? That, you must know, is quite impossible."

Monsieur de Latour sat down and mopped his forehead.

"Do you mean to say," he asked, "that General Granier is to be allowed to murder me in cold blood?"

"Not at all, monsieur, but I don't quite understand the state of affairs. You have sent a challenge, so you tell me, to General Granier."

"I never told you any such thing," bawled Monsieur de Latour, jumping up from his seat and walking up and down excitedly. "It is General Granier who insists upon fighting me—that is to say, murdering me in cold blood, as I told you. Now, I don't like the idea,

and I don't know any other man who does, and I demand the assistance of the law."

The policeman shook his head with a puzzled air, real or affected.

"If monsieur will return at nine o'clock, the commissary will be here," he said, "and will determine what to do."

"But I am to be shot at seven," cried Monsieur de Latour. "That nephew of mine—my uncle, that is—" Here Monsieur de Latour struck his forehead in anger and bewilderment. "Good heavens! what a world this is! Well, I call upon you to save the life of a French citizen who is to be shot at six, and you tell me to wait till nine, when the commissary will come. If you were not a policeman I should call you a great fool."

"Be careful," replied the policeman tartly, "or you will find yourself under arrest, monsieur, for abusing the police."

"Will I?" shouted Monsieur de Latour joyfully. "Well, then, I wish to tell you that I think you are the worst lot of rascallions, thieves, rogues and liars on the face of the earth. Now, arrest me if you like."

The policeman eyed Monsieur de Latour critically.

"I think," he said, "you are a little off your head."

"Then," promptly responded Monsieur de Latour, "arrest me as a dangerous lunatic."

"I don't think you are dangerous at all," replied the policeman, with the most exasperating calmness.

"I am," pleaded Monsieur de Latour, going up close to the policeman. "I am exceedingly dangerous. Now, for all you know, at this meeting with General Granier I may be determined to kill him."

"What, with a rapier? You don't look to me as if you would know a rapier when you saw it."

"No, no, no! We are to fight with guns fired with our legs."

"Come, now," said the policeman soothingly, "you sit here quietly and I will telephone to the Chateau of Mont-

plasir, where you say you belong, and get your uncle to come and fetch you."

With that the policeman rang up the telephone.

"Don't, don't, for heaven's sake!" cried Monsieur de Latour. "He would drag me off to the meeting-place and hold me up to be shot at."

But it was too late. The hour being early, the policeman had got the chateau immediately, and to Monsieur de Latour's horror he heard the policeman's end of the conversation something like this:

"Yes, he's here, talks very wild, but seems to be harmless. . . . You will be here immediately? . . . Thanks, monsieur. . . . Shall I order a rolling chair? Certainly; there is a place just across the street. . . . Keep him here if I can? . . . Oh, yes, he seems to be afraid to leave the station. . . . That is all? . . . Good morning, monsieur."

Monsieur de Latour knew well enough what all this meant. He sat down and sighed, and got up again and groaned.

"Your uncle will be here in a few minutes," said the policeman encouragingly, "and says he has telephoned for a wheeled chair to be here."

Monsieur de Latour, in a state of indescribable anguish, determined to make a last effort.

"See," he said to the policeman, "I am a most desperate character. I am the gentleman you probably read of in the newspapers last week in Paris. I am the person who took the nineteen ballet-girls out to the races and we drank among us one hundred and twenty-seven bottles of champagne—that is, I paid for one hundred and twenty-seven bottles—and smashed a twenty-thousand-franc automobile, and lost twelve thousand francs by betting on flies, and did a great many other things that I don't remember now. And I am determined to kill General Granier!" Here Monsieur de Latour assumed an air of fierceness entirely foreign to him, and shouted: "And I intend to have General Gra-

nier's blood! Do you understand that? I mean to kill him!"

"Of course! of course!" replied the policeman soothingly. "You couldn't do better. Now, sit down quietly, and you can kill him a great deal more comfortably when your uncle comes."

"But I wish to kill him now," shouted Monsieur de Latour, thinking his ruse had succeeded. "I am to meet him at seven o'clock in the wood on the edge of the field near the old windmill."

With that Monsieur de Latour made a feint of going out of the door, and cannoned against another policeman coming in to relieve the one at the desk. A whispered conversation took place between the two, and then Monsieur de Latour's enemy, as he had begun to regard this smart-looking policeman, came out and, taking him by the arm, said to him:

"Now, there is a wheeled chair at the door. Suppose you get in it, and I will wheel you about the town a little."

Monsieur de Latour hesitated for a moment and then joyfully consented. General Granier could not possibly attack him under the wing of a policeman. So, linking his arm in that of the policeman, they went out of the door, where they found a wheeled chair and an attendant. The policeman whispered a few words to the attendant, who went away laughing, and then, Monsieur de Latour seating himself within the wheeled chair, the policeman, with a grin almost as big as himself, began to shove it along the street.

"I think," said Monsieur de Latour, "it will be just as well for us to take a little tour about the town until about eight o'clock. By that time General Granier and his second will be tired of waiting, and then it will be quite safe for me to go back to the Chateau of Montplasir, and we can arrange to have both of us arrested, and I should prefer, myself, to be incarcerated. It is now only half-past six o'clock, so we can take quite a pleasant jaunt. I am certainly very

much obliged to you for pushing me, and hope you don't find me too heavy?"

"Not in the least," replied the policeman, to whom every proposition of Monsieur de Latour seemed agreeable.

"And whatever you do," said Monsieur de Latour, "don't take me anywhere near that wood. You see, my nephew——"

"I thought you said he was your uncle?"

"Oh, well, it doesn't make any difference—he will be there, and he wants me to fight. He dragged me into this thing, and I don't want to be at that place at that hour."

They were then on the outskirts of the town, and Monsieur de Latour, who was not very familiar with the locality, pleased himself with the notion that they were going farther and farther away from the dreaded spot near the windmill. The policeman, who was not very expert with wheeled chairs, bumped Monsieur de Latour up and down considerably, and once nearly jolted him out.

"Look here, my friend," said Monsieur de Latour, turning around and eying the fellow, who seemed to be enjoying the situation immensely, "I had just as soon be shot by General Granier as to be thrown out of this chair and have my neck broken."

"You see, monsieur," replied the policeman suavely, "I am not used to playing nursemaid for elderly gentlemen, and I am doing the best I can."

Presently they came to a pleasant country road which Monsieur de Latour remembered to have seen in his drives about the place, but what was his horror suddenly to find looming up before him a huge windmill.

"Take me away from here!" he cried to the policeman.

But the policeman, suddenly putting on a spurt, started the chair off at a dead run, jolting Monsieur de Latour most unmercifully and making it quite impossible for him to get out. His screams to stop were unheeded, and in about five minutes' time he found

himself in the appointed place in the wood just on the edge of the field. And, horror of horrors, there was General Granier, with his fierce-looking friend, another gentleman with a sinister-looking box which revealed his profession as a surgeon, and Louis de Latour. As soon as Louis caught sight of the wheeled chair, which the policeman was trundling along at a furious rate of speed, he rushed forward and clasping Monsieur de Latour in his arms, cried:

"I knew, my dear nephew, you would not disgrace the name you bear, and, like a true de Latour, you would be on the spot to defend your honor."

Monsieur de Latour, panting and exhausted, was still more agitated by the thought that he had escaped a broken neck at the policeman's hands, only to become a target for General Granier's leg. He held on firmly, however, to the sides of the chair, feeling himself safer there than standing on his feet.

"I told General Granier," continued Louis, "that I felt sure some accident had occurred which would merely delay your arrival. I went to your room at five o'clock and was puzzled by your disappearance, but I soon was called up over the telephone and discovered where you were. I thought it useless to come to the police station after you, knowing that nothing would detain you from this place at this hour."

Every man has in him some species of courage, and Monsieur de Latour had enough moral courage to own up to a lack of physical courage.

"My dear Louis," he said, recovering himself, "we may as well understand each other. I never had the slightest idea of standing up to be shot at by General Granier. If he chooses to murder an innocent man sitting here in a wheeled chair, he may do it—I am at his mercy—but as for taking part in a duel, nothing was further from my intention, and I said so all the time!"

Louis gazed at him meditatively.

"I think the presence of this policeman has something to do with what

you say," he replied, "but I think we can easily stop his mouth."

Louis came up to the policeman and looked meaningly into his face, at which the policeman, upon whose countenance a stupendous grin was fixed, said:

"I sha'n't make any trouble, monsieur; but I think it only fair to tell you that this is the most bloodthirsty old gentleman I ever came across in my life. He swore that he would have General Granier's blood and meant to kill him at all costs. I never saw a man in my life so bent on murder as he is."

"You are an infernal——"

Monsieur de Latour was going to say liar, but it suddenly occurred to him that the policeman had some justification for what he said.

"Very well," he said, tucking his feet under him, "it makes no difference what I said—perhaps I had a motive in it. But I don't mean to fight—I have said that from the beginning, and I am not a man to say one thing one day and one the next."

At that the fierce-looking person, whom Louis addressed as Major Le Gallian, advanced and said freezingly to Louis:

"Monsieur, now that you have your principal on the ground, is it not as well to begin work?"

"No," promptly replied Monsieur de Latour. "You may not have heard what I said, so I will repeat it for your benefit. I never agreed to fight General Granier; I have no grudge against him, and if he has one against me I am willing to apologize. That is final."

Major Le Gallian stood there at attention and looked at Louis, as much as to say, "The next move is yours."

General Granier, some distance off, was making mysterious gyrations with his right leg lifted at an angle which would have disturbed the equilibrium of most men, but which he maintained with perfect ease. The sight of him at that very moment was most terrifying to Monsieur de Latour. Louis, with an air of great perturbation,

turned again to Monsieur de Latour and began to speak, but the latter, waving his hand, cut him short.

"Not a word, not a word, my dear boy—my mind is made up and has been all the time."

"Do you mean to say," asked Louis sternly, "that you do not intend to live up to the courageous traditions of the house of de Latour?"

"That is precisely what I don't mean to do," promptly answered Monsieur de Latour. "And to be perfectly frank with you, I would rather be a live soap-boiler than a dead head of the house of de Latour."

"Then I shall be obliged to disown you as my nephew."

"I wish you would. It has bothered me almost to death ever since the unlucky *contretemps* occurred."

To have a principal on the ground who positively refuses to fight would be an embarrassing situation for most men; but Louis, with the air of a man who supposes that no one has heard what has passed, turned to Major Le Gallian.

"I think," he said, "that we may as well begin measuring off the ground."

This took them off a little distance, and if Monsieur de Latour had been experienced in such matters he would have noticed that their heads were uncommonly close together for gentlemen engaged in such grim work, and both of them carefully avoided letting their faces be seen.

Monsieur de Latour dived down in his pockets and, producing four twenty-franc pieces held them up to the policeman and nodded anxiously. The policeman's grin grew broader, if possible, and he nodded back, and then, with a whirl that almost pitched Monsieur de Latour out of the wheeled chair, the policeman started him off down the road at a gait that would have put a professional sprinter to his trumps.

Both Louis de Latour and Major Le Gallian were keeping their backs to their principals, so that the policeman got a good start of them before they

found that the bird had flown. But General Granier had seen the whole proceeding and shouting, "Stop him! stop him!" started off in chase. But his right leg, which was an excellent weapon, was by no means sufficient as a motor and very much impeded his progress. And by some strange fortuity neither Louis de Latour nor Major Le Gallian could be made to heed the general's shouts and efforts to catch the rapidly retreating wheeled chair. When at last he succeeded in attracting their attention and pointed down the road, the wheeled chair had just turned the corner of a thicket some distance off, and both Louis and Major Le Gallian, looking in an entirely opposite direction, declared they saw no sign of Monsieur de Latour, and could not imagine in what direction he had vanished. This infuriated General Granier, who, shaking his fist in the faces of Major Le Gallian and Louis de Latour, shrieked:

"You have tricked me and played with me. Was ever a gentleman so treated before? I demand satisfaction of both of you."

Louis and Major Le Gallian were profuse in apologies, and Louis explained Monsieur de Latour's conduct.

"You see, my dear general," he said, "after all, my nephew is but a soap-boiler, and how absurd it is to expect a soap-boiler to have a sense of *noblesse oblige*. I apologize for him, and if you insist on fighting, I will cheerfully take my nephew's place."

"I do insist on fighting," screamed General Granier, snapping his false teeth viciously.

But here Major Le Gallian interfered.

"I can't permit this," he said. "The proceedings this morning have been so unusual that it is impossible they can be taken seriously, and they cannot be carried further."

"At all events," said Louis, with a bow to General Granier, "the gallantry shown by you, monsieur, is worthy of your name and military rank. I shall have great pleasure in testifying to it, particularly in the presence of my

nephew, whose conduct I deplore, and that of the Comtesse de Beauregard, who, as you know, is a great admirer of spirit in a man. I am inclined to think that my nephew has lost whatever chance he had of winning Madame de Beauregard's hand."

A sudden change came over General Granier's wizened old face.

"Do you think so?" asked he, stroking his mustache.

"I certainly do," responded Louis. "And I may say to you that there are other gentlemen whom I might name who come much nearer Madame de Beauregard's ideas of a man than my nephew, worthy as he is and admirable in his own province of soap-boiling. I hope, monsieur, that matters may be arranged so that our former pleasant relations may be resumed, and that I may have the pleasure of seeing you at the Chateau of Montplasir, especially during Madame de Beauregard's stay there."

General Granier, smiling like a May morning, replied:

"I am perfectly willing, monsieur, to be reconciled to Monsieur de Latour, and any arrangement which Major Le Gallian makes will be agreeable to me. I need scarcely say that I am without malice in the affair."

Louis and Major Le Gallian retired a few yards off, and Louis whispered in Major Le Gallian's ear:

"We can have a great deal of amusement still out of the old gentleman, so you had better arrange to bring him up to the chateau to dinner tonight, and come yourself."

Major Le Gallian, whose countenance had been hitherto unmoved, winked and grinned in reply, and then, turning to General Granier, announced gravely that everything had been settled to his entire satisfaction, and that he had accepted an invitation for both his principal and himself to dine at the chateau that night.

Meanwhile the doctor, sitting with his back against a tree, had fallen asleep. Major Le Gallian, going up to him, shook him vigorously and shouted in his ear:

"Get up. The whole thing has been arranged and not a shot has been fired."

"Eh?" cried the doctor, jumping up, "so nothing happened, after all? Well, I am very much disappointed—that's all I can say—and I really hoped to have had some interesting professional experiences."

And then, taking up his gruesome-looking case, he disconsolately followed Major Le Gallian and General Granier down the road to where their carriage awaited them. The cabman, who had also fallen asleep on his box, seemed equally disappointed when he found his patrons had escaped without death or even humiliation.

About a half-hour later a cab and a wheeled chair both appeared before the entrance of the Chateau of Montplasir. Louis de Latour jumped out of the cab while Monsieur de Latour scrambled out of the wheeled chair. The four gold pieces slipped into the policeman's hand brought a colossal grin to his countenance, but it was nothing to the air of pleasure and relief which Monsieur de Latour wore. He took Louis by the arm, and the two marched into the room known as Monsieur de Latour's study.

"I have thought it all over," said Monsieur de Latour, sitting down in a chair and putting his hands on his knees, "and I know what to do."

"What do you mean?" asked Louis.

"Why, the whole business, marrying and the rest of it. I am not going to marry Madame de Beauregard. That woman is too much for me."

"So everybody knows," remarked Louis.

"In fact, I would rather stand up and be shot at by General Granier's leg than marry Madame de Beauregard, with the life she would lead me. And as for a pretty young girl like Julie, that unfortunate peculiarity she has of always leaving out one word in everything she writes and getting one word twisted in everything she tells is very annoying. So I have abandoned all idea of marrying her. Perhaps she might take you."

Louis assumed a reflective air.

"I think," he said, "I could break her of that unfortunate habit, as you call it, which she has," and at the same moment he took a dainty note out of his pocket.

It was in Julie's expansive handwriting, but there was not a single word left out and it was expressed with the utmost clearness and precision.

"I shall venture to read it to you," said Louis. "I don't think that Mademoiselle de Brésac will be offended with me." And he read:

"I have just had your note. Nothing would induce me to marry anyone except you. If my aunt and Monsieur de Latour will not give their consent, then we can wait; but I am always, until I die, your own

"JULIE DE C. DE BRESAC."

Monsieur de Latour listened attentively.

"Now, if she had been as clear and businesslike as that in what she wrote for me I would have been perfectly satisfied."

"Possibly she did not understand so well what you wished her to say."

"She seems to understand well enough what she wishes to say herself in this case. Well, now, I shall tell you my plan. I shall marry Mademoiselle Chéri."

"Provided she will have you."

"Oh, I think she will."

"And also provided that I consent. Remember, my dear fellow, that I am your uncle."

"The devil you are!"

"Recollect, if you please, the legal rights of adoption."

Monsieur de Latour jumped up and taking an angry turn or two about the room, sat down again.

"Very well," he said, "if you refuse your consent to my marrying Mademoiselle Chéri I can very easily refuse my consent to your marrying Julie."

"Monsieur Bertoux tells me that it is a complicated question," responded Louis, "but nevertheless our marriage could scarcely be prevented. But I, as your uncle, could very easily prevent your marrying Mademoiselle Chéri."

This infuriated Monsieur de Latour,

who, shaking his fist in Louis's face, bawled:

"I'd like to see you try, and I have a great mind to elope to America with Mademoiselle Chéri this very day!"

Louis whistled softly, by way of showing his contempt for this proposition. Then Monsieur de Latour, lapsing into a gloomy silence, sat huddled up in his chair for some minutes. Then he growled:

"If I give my consent to your marriage with Julie I presume you would consent, confound you! to my marriage with Mademoiselle Chéri?"

"Certainly I would," replied Louis, "but I should still exercise a fatherly care of you, and see that two giddy young things like you and Mademoiselle Chéri did not commit any indiscretions—like your duel of this morning, for example."

"Into which you dragged me against my will," replied Monsieur de Latour. "But I outwitted all of you. It cost me eighty francs, but it was the best investment I ever made. It saved my life from that bloodthirsty old general."

"I shall, of course," continued Louis loftily, "keep an eye upon you, regulate your expenditures and require you to report to me at least once a week till I see how you are behaving yourself. This will be my duty as your uncle."

Monsieur de Latour ground his teeth with rage. Then, after another pause, he said:

"I believe that whole scheme was arranged between you and Julie."

A smile flickered in Louis's eyes, but he made no reply to this. At last Monsieur de Latour cried:

"Confound both of you! But I will give you the three hundred thousand francs to let me off from that agreement."

"No, my dear Victor," answered Louis, shaking his head, "agreeable as it would be to me to have those three hundred thousand francs, I can't make a relationship so delicate and tender as ours a matter of barter and sell."

"You mean the power of thwarting

and opposing me?" cried Monsieur de Latour very excitedly. "Well, I will give you four hundred thousand francs to let me off."

"No, I cannot, after having just acquired you as a nephew, part with you so easily."

"So cheaply, you mean. I will give you five hundred thousand francs."

"You affront me."

"Five hundred and fifty thousand."

"You insult me."

"Six hundred thousand."

"Be silent. I can stand no more."

"You mean you won't let me off at any price?"

"I must consult Julie first."

"This is enough to put a man in a madhouse—that I am to be discussed by those two flibbertigibbets. Of course it's nothing but a scheme to get money out of me, but six hundred thousand francs is all I mean to pay for my liberty."

Just then the door burst open, and in pranced Madame de Beauregard. It was still very early in the morning, and Madame de Beauregard had not made her midday toilet. She wore a peignoir, and the deficiencies of her hairdressing were concealed by a shawl wrapped around her head. She had slippers on her little feet, but Monsieur de Latour suspected that she had omitted to put on her stockings.

Monsieur de Latour, not feeling equal to encountering Madame de Beauregard just at that moment, retired hastily into his bedroom adjoining. But Madame de Beauregard, who was no respecter of persons, followed him in and almost collared him as he retreated toward the fireplace.

"So," she cried, "you call yourself a man of spirit, and you are put into a wheeled chair to be carried to the field of honor, and pay a policeman eighty francs to trundle you away. And I believe you actually got it into your ridiculous old head that I would marry you. Not for worlds!"

Here Louis, seeing a chance to put in a word for General Granier, said:

"But, madame, General Granier was present and acted with the utmost gal-

lantry. I have never seen such a fire-eater. He not only frightened my nephew, but he frightened me."

"Did he really?" asked Madame de Beauregard, whirling around.

"And his leg was as steady as a rock, though he had been up three nights running, playing cards and drinking champagne until breakfast-time."

"Was he really? Well, I declare, if he were fifty years younger I'd marry him."

"He's coming to dinner tonight," said Louis insinuatingly. "My own belief, madame, is that you would have difficulty in finding any man fifty years younger than General Granier with the life and spirit that he has in him."

"At all events," said Madame de Beauregard, addressing Monsieur de Latour, who, chased almost into the fireplace, was about taking refuge in the closet, "I shouldn't think of marrying an old sheep like you, my dear man. You had much better marry the soap-boiler's daughter, Mademoiselle Cheri, and the couple of you will be about as tame as a pair of barnyard fowls."

Monsieur de Latour, stung by the contempt expressed in Madame de Beauregard's tone, plucked up his courage.

"It is my wish to marry Mademoiselle Cheri, if she will have me, madame," he said, "and as for leading the life of barnyard fowls—well, it agrees with my digestion better than the life that you, madame, will probably lead with General Granier. And now, madame, if you will kindly leave me, I wish to arrange my toilet."

"Don't mind me," said the old lady nonchalantly, seating herself on the bed.

Monsieur de Latour, meaning to frighten her, peeled off his coat. Madame de Beauregard, without flinching, spread her petticoats around her, and began to sing a song which ended in a refrain of "tra la la something or other." Monsieur de Latour then removed his waistcoat, but Madame de Beauregard stood, or rather sat, her ground.

"Will you force me, madame, to

appear *sans culottes?*" asked Monsieur de Latour in desperation.

"Just as you please, my dear man. I don't mind a little thing like that."

Monsieur de Latour, finding himself defeated, resumed his waistcoat and coat, and offering his arm to Madame de Beauregard, the old lady skipped off with him. Monsieur de Latour escorted her out to the terrace. There sat Mademoiselle Cheri, Mélanie and Eugène de Contiac. Madame de Beauregard's sketchy toilet gave a slight shock to all of them, but the old lady herself remarked casually:

"I know I haven't got half enough clothes on, but you needn't look at me, and you can't see without looking, that much is certain."

Eugène de Contiac had in his hands a book of sermons. He made not the least attempt to conceal this when Madame de Beauregard appeared, but held it openly and shamelessly in view.

"So you are at it again!" shrieked Madame de Beauregard. "That's the way it has been ever since that idiotic Bertoux paid the two hundred and fifty thousand francs to your credit in bank. He says I told him to do it, and perhaps I did, as I really thought you had mended your ways by that trip to Paris."

"My dear aunt," said Eugène, "Mélanie has forgiven me that trip to Paris, and I have promised her never to go upon a like expedition. I was perfectly safe in doing this, as another week like that would be my death. And as you have kindly made me independent, Mélanie has agreed to marry me, provided Monsieur de Latour gives his consent."

Monsieur de Latour assumed a very stern and forbidding air, and then said:

"I must consider it."

Then Mademoiselle Cheri, rising and going to him with the familiarity of an old friend, said:

"Come now, Victor, you don't mean that you will really interfere with the happiness of these two young people?"

Monsieur de Latour, seeing his chance, remarked significantly:

"Shall we discuss it a little, then?" And the two walked off toward the orangery.

Once under its green shade, Monsieur de Latour, with the air and manner of a man of twenty-five making love to a girl of eighteen, said:

"I will give my consent upon one condition, and it is that you, Seline, forgive all my follies and faithlessness, and marry me. I am done with great people. I have nearly been killed by two of them—that dreadful old woman over yonder and General Granier. I am a changed man. Instead of being the head of the house of de Latour, I should like to return to Brionville and boil soap the rest of my life. And if you, Seline, will go with me, I will promise you to lead a quiet, respectable and, I hope, respected life the rest of my days."

Mademoiselle Seline looked at him and her kind eyes grew kinder.

"If that be true, Victor," she said after a moment, "then we may indeed spend the rest of our lives together. As long as you aspired to rank and fashion and courted the society of people above you, who simply amused themselves at your expense, I could not think of marrying you. But now that you have become the Victor de Latour of twenty years ago, well then—"

Mademoiselle Cheri, with a smile, gave her hand, still plump and pretty, to Monsieur de Latour, who raised it to his lips.

"And now," she said, "you will not stand between Mélanie and her happiness, for I know that those two are sincerely attached to each other."

Monsieur de Latour and Mademoiselle Cheri, their countenances beaming, returned to the group, which had been increased by the appearance of Louis and Julie, who had come from heaven knows where. As soon as they caught sight of Monsieur de Latour and Mademoiselle Cheri they all knew that something had happened—that something which makes

or mars a lifetime. In this case it was evident that Monsieur de Latour's happiness was made forever. His countenance shone like the harvest moon, he stepped high, as one in whose veins joy is pulsating, and he radiated satisfaction. Mademoiselle Cheri was smiling and composed, and her countenance expressed a tranquil happiness.

"My friends," said Monsieur de Latour as they drew near, still holding Mademoiselle Cheri's plump hand, "felicitate me, I beg of you. Mademoiselle Cheri has promised to forgive me and to marry me."

At this Mélanie kissed them both joyfully, and Louis, with a paternal air, said:

"My dear nephew, I assure you there is no one I would more gladly welcome as my niece than Mademoiselle Cheri, and I may say that Julie feels as I do."

"Indeed I do!" cried Julie, laying her hand upon Monsieur de Latour's arm. "As the prospective aunt of you and Mademoiselle Cheri——"

"What did you say?" asked Monsieur de Latour incredulously.

"As your prospective aunt, dear Victor," Julie reiterated, with the calmest air in the world. "Of course, if I marry Louis, I shall be your aunt."

"Come," said Monsieur de Latour, "let us stop all this nonsense. I haven't the slightest objection to your

marrying Louis. I like the scamp, in spite of the annoyance that he has caused me, and I believe him to be an excellent fellow, but I can't be made ridiculous by this uncle and nephew business. There has been quite enough of it and I desire you to stop it. So I propose that today we shall straighten out the relationship and correct the mistake that you made, and I will hand over the three hundred thousand francs with which I agreed to endow Louis. It is worth that much to get rid of his patronizing airs and infernal meddling."

At this Monsieur de Latour found himself struggling in Louis's embrace and almost felt his ribs crackling, while Julie nearly strangled him with kisses. Madame de Beauregard's clear old voice cut the morning air as she proclaimed:

"Good heavens! all the world seems to be getting married. I shall ring up General Granier over the telephone and tell him that I mean to marry him just as soon as I have time to attend to anything. Let me see—automobiling this morning, casino in the afternoon, dinner at night, automobiling tomorrow morning, casino in the afternoon, ball in the evening—well, I shall arrange to get married as soon as possible; but one leads such a gay life in Dinard that it's very hard to get time to do anything, even to get married."



HIS EXCUSE

MRS. HOLT—What excuse have you for coming home in this condition?
HOLT—You!



MANY a man's a financier who has no bank account.

HIS DREAMS

By R. K. Munkittrick

LIKE one who lingers in a rosy dream,
He wandered on the shell-gemmed shining shore,
Unconscious of the booming of the waves,
For all his soul was filled with pleasant thoughts
When on a rock he sat, and musingly
Embroidered with his polished walking-stick
These names upon the twinkling wave-ribbed sand:

Ethel, Edna, Cora,
Gladys, Isabel,
Lucy, Bertha, Dora,
Rosamund, Adell.

Then did he pause to watch a purple gull
That caught the sun and flashed a polished gem
Against the spaces of the beryl sky;
And when the gull had disappeared, again
He wrote as if in lines of living fire:

Barbara, Lucinda,
Caroline, Annette,
Agatha, Belinda,
Adelaide, Babette.

Lovingly o'er these names he bent and mused,
While o'er the lettered sinuosities
He ran his eye with something of the air
Of one who's more than fully satisfied
With everything that destiny has sent.
After a moment's pause again he wrote,
His optics flashing with a gleam divine:

Marjorie, Cordelia,
Mariana, Fan,
Gwendolen, Amelia,
Mabel, Agnes, Nan.

Oft round his head he swung his walking-stick,
Then whirled abeam a bombshell lit with joy,
And, dream-begilded in his merriment,
He scribbled on the sounding strand once more
These names which held him with their witchery:

Wilhelmina, Hilda,
 Alice, Dolly, Sue,
 Abigail, Matilda,
 Maud, Rebecca, Prue.

Then while his mind swarmed with a vision rare
 Of chocolates and luscious caramels
 And of fine diamond rings, he wandered on,
 Humming a love song in his perfect glee;
 For he was, when the simple truth is told,
 A Romeo Mormon, very much engaged!



A MODERN DIALOGUE

KIND LADY (*pityingly*)—How long, my good man, have you been a tramp?
 TRAMP—Only, lady, since me showfur was arrested for speeding.



CRUEL MAN

JONES—Well, I got the best of my wife yesterday.

HAMILTON—How did you manage it?

“Why, I admitted that I was wrong before she had a chance to argue with me.”



VAN BLUNTT—When sailing down the river of married life a couple should look out for rocks.

VAN SHORTT—Yes, they'll need 'em.



A MONUMENT is merely a reminder of one who has been forgotten.

HASHIMOTO

By Stephen French Whitman

“THAT’S an odd sight.”
“What?”
“A Japanese with a full beard.”

My friend, turning in his chair, glanced at the little, yellowish man who was unfolding his napkin at the next table.

“He’s no Japanese,” my friend remarked, turning back. “He’s a Portuguese. His name’s on the book inside; I forget it, but he comes from Lisbon.”

“I think not,” I said, looking carefully at the man between my friend’s head and the waiter’s arm. “His name may be Portuguese and he may come from Lisbon, but before that he came from Japan.”

“Oh, rubbish!” exclaimed my friend, with a little laugh. “He looks far more Portuguese than Japanese. See his eyes; level, deep-set, with flat lids—distinctly not Asiatic. His nose is short and straight—almost Arabian.”

“Exactly; you have described the two most striking features of that rare Japanese type that has the Malay strain in it. Now I will show you: His hair is too stiff; through his childhood his head was shaved. His way of handling things is Japanese. His way of moving his lips is Japanese. Can’t you see it?”

“Much obliged,” said my friend, laughing again; “it is a little dull here and you furnish the sensation. A Japanese spy, disguised.”

“I never said so.”

“A Japanese spy in Amsterdam?”

“Why a spy at all? There are several other reasons why a man might care to lose his identity. A man may have affairs of his own. Now, must I

confess that other people’s affairs, if they are unusual, interest me? When a Japanese, for instance, signs himself from Lisbon—”

I glanced at the stranger and caught him looking at us thoughtfully. Naturally, I changed the conversation.

We were dining on the terrace of the Amstel, by the big canal. The sun was just going out of sight and the water below was all shining from it; it burned the sails of the old Dutch canal-boats a deeper umber and sparkled on the sails of the spider-like rowing shells that slipped up and down the current. On the square across the water the level light made pink, dazzling flecks, like flower petals, out of the country girls’ linen head-dresses; it picked out, in little, diamond-like flashes, the sword scabbards and buckles of the hurrying recruits; it slid in blazing red squares from window-pane to window-pane of the peak-roofed Hollander houses, all rose-colored. In a room inside a string orchestra was playing, slowly and softly, “Sourire d’Avril,” and even the waiters, as they moved among the tables, hummed the air to themselves. It was all very peaceful and very pleasant.

In the calmness and satisfaction induced by the scene, the finished dinner and the cigar, I felt quite sure that the little, bearded, yellow man at the next table had changed his name and nationality for some reason wholly benevolent. He seemed to me, as he sat and drank, very small and solitary and out of place—merely a lonely little Asiatic without friends. I think it was this after-dinner softness of heart as much as curiosity which set me to

planning how I might bridge the gap between our tables; but just as I was constructing a reasonable excuse for doing so, my friend snapped his watch, recalled to mind an engagement of ours, and hurried me away.

My friend and I went that evening down to a theatre in the Rembrandt Plein, and returned late, influenced, by the antics of a Viennese company in a thoroughly Parisian opera bouffe, to the extreme of careless modernity. But when, about midnight, I went alone into the big, dim hotel reading-room, I felt this condition suddenly go from me, leaving a peculiar sensation of vague restlessness.

A dozen times before I had entered this room and read in it at about this hour without any such emotion as I felt now; therefore it was hardly probable that the room itself was in any way uncongenial and depressing. For such a sudden fall in spirits I could hardly blame myself. What was it, then?

I found alone, in a corner, the little, bearded, yellow man, huddled in a great leather chair under a solitary light. At another time, perhaps, I might have satisfied myself that it was some unfriendly influence of his that had disturbed me; but at this moment I could not bring myself to explain my change of feeling for him. I looked all around in the shadows, really half expecting to find someone or something else of a more unfavorable sort; but save for the little man in the big chair I could see nothing anywhere that I had not noticed in the room before.

I went over toward the stranger. With his pocket-knife he was cutting a scrap out of a newspaper. When he saw me he whisked the clipping into his waistcoat pocket, snapped his knife shut and tossed the journal carelessly under a table. He got up, yawned, produced a cigarette-case and looked at me doubtfully. I was right; he was lonely.

"Will you have a cigarette?" he asked suddenly in English.

"Will you try a cigar?" I said at the

same moment. We both smiled, he very faintly, but with that peculiar expression that never quite escapes artificiality and that is all Japanese. He took a cigar with a little bow which he checked almost as soon as it was begun. We sat down together.

"You like Amsterdam?" he inquired soon.

"Very well. And you?"

"I find it odd and interesting, of course. These Dutch—they do everything a little differently from the others. They bring a certain air of their own to doing things—do I make that clear? My English is not—I am a Portuguese, you see."

"Ah, perhaps from Lisbon?"

"Yes. L-lisbon."

He drew out his "l" deliberately as though he found it hard to pronounce. So that even while he was pretending to tell me where he came from, I knew that he was lying; for there is only one nation that finds the "l" nearly impossible—and that nation is not the Portuguese.

"But I cannot quite agree," I said, "that the Dutch do everything a little differently. Did you ever notice how the men on these canals pole their big boats? Very strangely, in every motion of theirs, their way is identical with that of the Japanese."

"Yes?" he exclaimed politely.

"Yes. Is it a coincidence, or could the Dutch have got this habit from the Japanese? There was a Hollander colony once in some Japanese seaport—some seaport in the South. Not Nagasaki?"

"Nagasaki?" he repeated doubtfully. "I am sorry that I don't know—" He stopped suddenly and fluttered his eyelids. He had called it "Nangaski," as only men from the south of Japan call it.

He began to examine me, through the cigar smoke, with furtive curiosity. I talked to him quietly about many things; he answered in polite monosyllables, all the while watching me. Finally, while I was still talking, his eyes wavered from my face and stared past me, widening. The only

light in the big, shadowy room was the electric lamp on the table at our side, shining directly on his face, so that as he stared I saw perfectly the pupils of his eyes growing smaller and smaller.

At that moment I had a distinct sensation of some presence behind me in the gloom. The whole house was composed and absolutely still; I had heard no sound of a step; and yet I felt that someone was standing close behind my back. Quickly I turned around, and, on seeing no one at all, was somewhat more startled than if I had found a man within reach of my hand.

"I would have sworn," I exclaimed, perhaps a little irritably, "that there was someone in the shadows looking at us—"

The little yellow man took a cigarette out of his case, and with an involuntary twitch broke it between his fingers. Plucking out another, he lighted it hurriedly.

"A servant, perhaps," he said in a low voice. He ran his tongue over his lips, shot a fleeting glance at me, and began inhaling lungfuls of smoke. "A servant at the door, maybe, to turn out the rights—lights; saw us—went away."

I settled myself in my chair without replying. It was a new and unwelcome sensation that I felt and that, against my will, I had to acknowledge; and yet, not a new sensation altogether, but one merely long forgotten. I had not had that odd feeling of baffled, helpless uneasiness since I was a child, lying in a dark room and waking with a start, to believe that there had just been something near me that I could not understand.

My companion had been talking for some moments, hurriedly and continuously, before I began to pay attention to his words:

"—and I should judge, from one thing and another, if you will pardon me, that your profession is in some way built on observation—"

"Why," I admitted, "it is necessarily, I suppose, more or less inquisitive. To write things—"

"Ah!" Immediately his face changed, was for an instant plainly touched with relief and then, almost as quickly, readjusted. "To write? Of course; why did I not think of that? I thought of two or three other things—but not that."

"And you?" I asked bluntly.

"What do you think?" he parried.

"Oh, I am at sea, too; except that I can tell that you have been a soldier. But in some countries, nearly every able-bodied man has been a soldier."

He sat, for a moment, looking at his long finger-nails in silence. At length, with a little, hacking laugh:

"You are quite right; I have been in the army; but, you see, you miss my present occupation. You were bound to miss it, though, because I have none."

"None!" I exclaimed. "That's bad. But it can't be so, you know; you must have some occupation—everyone must. Once, crossing the Pacific, I met a man who seemed to have a good deal of money and absolutely no occupation; but I found, after a little while, that he had one, and a most uncommonly engrossing one it was."

"What was it?"

"Getting away with the money. So, you see—"

Stopping short, I got up, went over to the door and looked out. The long, dark hall was quite empty.

"That's odd," I exclaimed. "Now I would have said—"

While I spoke the little yellow man was close by my side at the door, picking at his stiff, black beard and peering up and down the hall.

"What did you see?"

"Nothing at all; that's it."

"But you saw no one?"

"Why—I felt someone about."

He looked up at me, smiling uncertainly.

"Perhaps you smoke too much," he ventured, somewhat lamely. "Perhaps so. Yes, very likely. Well, it's one o'clock; I go to bed. And you?"

We walked down the hall together and parted in the rotunda. He went up one staircase and I up the other.

But just as I reached my door, a thought stopped me. I remembered how, coming into the reading-room at midnight, I had found him cutting a piece out of a newspaper.

For perhaps two minutes I stood there before my door, hesitating. If that trivial act of his had been an incident in an ordinary evening, it would not probably have been recalled by me. And even if it had, I would not conceivably have found sufficient curiosity to do what I did then. For, after a time of indecision, I turned about and went down the stairs, along the dusky corridor and into the lonely reading-room.

The solitary light still burned over the table, and under it I found the newspaper. I took this up and spread it open on the table-top. It was a month-old *Kobe Chronicle*, a journal published by Englishmen in the Japanese seaport. In the middle of the first page was a gap, where perhaps an eighth of a column of print had been cut out. I noted the date carefully; it occurred to me that if there was another *Kobe Chronicle* of that number in Amsterdam, I would be pleased to read in it the missing paragraphs.

While I studied the page I became aware, once more, of some foreign influence drawing near. I raised my head and stared at the black square of the doorway. I felt distinctly, all at once, that something which I could not see had passed the threshold and come in. And it was only after this unpleasant impression had firmly taken hold of me that I heard the faint sound of footsteps outside, which I did not in the least associate with my idea of a presence that I felt to be already in the room. It was to me as though something impalpable had come in and, now, someone palpable was to follow it. I watched the doorway carefully and saw, after a moment, the Japanese come lightly into it and stand there, looking at me.

We stared at each other. At length I said, with perfect banality, but starting at the sound of my own voice:

"I am reading the *Kobe Chronicle*."
He drew in his breath with a little hiss.

"I knew you would come back to do so," he replied, "but not how soon. That is why I half expected to be first."

He stepped into the room, but in a moment stopped suddenly and sent a swift glance toward the shadows by the window curtains. He came on, then, toward the table; but as he did so it seemed to me that he shrank almost imperceptibly toward the blank wall. It was very strange that I, too, had conceived the belief that there was something, disturbing and invisible, by the window curtains.

He stood beside me and put his finger on the gap in the newspaper's page. He said:

"Sooner or later, I think, you will read that piece there. I would rather that you read it now."

Taking from his waistcoat pocket the missing part, he fitted it into the page. I drew back sharply, flushing, and muttered:

"I can't read it now."

His face was twisted and quite ghastly in his effort to smile.

"I desire you to. I believe that it was all necessary; your coming in tonight, your finding me here, your noticing—things. *Shiyo ga nai*, as you say, kismet."

I looked at the clipping. It was short, written in English with that underlying satisfaction which pervades the work of the English reporter in the Japanese port when he has unearthed something black in the native life about him. It said in substance merely that a Captain Hashimoto, of a certain regiment serving in the Kumamoto district, reported as a suicide after the discovery that important military secrets had been sold abroad, was, according to late rumors, no suicide at all, but a fugitive in a distant country.

I read this twice, for I could hardly comprehend it. It seemed impossible to me that in all the Japanese army, which is quite different in its devotion from any other army, there could be such a circumstance as this. Still dis-

believing, I looked at the face of the man beside me.

"It is a mistake?" I demanded.

"I did it," he said softly. He put the clipping into his pocket and slowly we walked together, finding no words in that moment, to the dark doorway. Just as we reached the threshold he grasped my arm tightly, pushed against me and drove me to one side. His head, lowered between his shoulders, was turned the other way; his breath went in and out with little hisses. He was looking at something that he saw and that I felt—that made him shake against my arm and that set my scalp to tingling—something noiseless and unseen that I know went past us and out into the bare hall.

"God!" I cried. "What is it?"

Without a word he hurried me down to the dim rotunda. There, while some sleepy, wondering porter stared at us from his corner, he wrenched his arm from mine and went scrambling up the stairs and out of sight. I stood looking up after him, scarcely breathing till I heard a door slammed somewhere above.

Then I went to bed. At sunrise I fell asleep.

II

A DESPATCH that I got that same morning made it necessary for me to hurry toward England; a boat was to sail at noon from Rotterdam, and with the greatest difficulty I reached it at the last moment.

In the stress of all this I found no place for more than momentary thoughts of what had happened the night before. The sun shone on me; trains and carriages whirled me from one point to another; a little steamship received me finally and took me out of a maze of shipping and dock machinery and down a flat-banked river lined with utterly precise little windmills, little herds of cows and little, orderly lines of trees. Through all this hurry there was little time for imagination; in these surroundings

there was small possibility of it. That remarkable hour I had spent in the dim reading-room of the Amstel now seemed very remote. Those emotions that had profoundly stirred me there it was impossible, now, to recall and examine. I was a stranger to sensations of inexplicable terror; having experienced them in a lonely and quiet place late at night, I was inclined to be ashamed of them and dismiss them in the sunlight. And I believe that I did dismiss them, at least from active consciousness; so that when I landed that night in England I had, under the influences about me, reduced my experience to an episode unusual but normal, whose own excitement had curiously unstrung both of us who were parties to it.

It was a week after my arrival in London when I found myself, late in the evening, losing my bearings in a fog that had thickened while I was walking from a music-hall to my hotel. By the cessation of an up-grade, I knew that I was nearly at the riverside, on which the hotel stood; but, losing track of landmarks, I went too far and discovered that what I had taken, in the distance, to be the lamps at the hotel entrance were the lights that marked the approach to Blackfriars Bridge. I stopped, my sense of location adjusted, and was about to turn back, when the weird panorama of murky lights on the river below attracted me. I stepped on the bridge, and leaning over the parapet, looked down.

There was a small man, barely distinguishable, standing against the same parapet some dozen feet away. Somehow he made me uneasy; while I should reasonably have felt, on seeing him, that the scene was less lonely, I discovered immediately that it was depressing to an extent I had not realized before. A desire seized me for warmth, light and the close companionship of healthy people. I stepped away from the bridge side and, at the same moment, he did so too. By a mischance, we nearly came together; involuntarily I gripped my

stick and, leaning forward, peered into his face. It was Hashimoto.

"Ah!" he said sharply, putting up a hand to his cheek. Then he dropped both arms to his sides and stood looking at me.

"You are not afraid?" I asked.

"Of what?"

"How do you know who I am? I had your secret in Amsterdam; I vanished the next morning. Now I find you here. How do you know what I am here for?"

"I am not afraid of—that," he replied.

"Ah! then what is it that you are afraid of?"

Even while we had been speaking, all those abnormal sensations which I had felt in the reading-room in Amsterdam and which I had denied ever since, came sweeping over me, undeniable now, and intense. Yet I must say that it did not seem to me, even then, that he himself was the source of those sensations; for I came closer to him—for companionship, I think.

"Well," he said abruptly, after a moment, "will you come with me? You know this is kismet. I think you will come with me?"

"Yes," I answered him.

We walked to the end of the bridge; presently we saw the misty lights of a hansom roving by, and hailed them. The cab drew up and we climbed in. Hashimoto gave the name of a little, quiet hotel near Piccadilly, and we were soon there. We got out in silence, as we had come, passed through the deserted lobby, rode upstairs and entered his room. He switched on the lights, shut the door and locked it.

"Cigars?" he suggested, with an attempt at a conventional tone—"or cigarettes? Wait; I will ring for something to drink."

"What is the use of all that?" I retorted, with my nerves in a jangle. For some wild reason it struck me that it would be nearly as appropriate to drink and smoke in a tomb as in this room of his. And yet, I know that such a thought will be incomprehensible, for the place was bright with

lights reflected in mirrors, glowing on gay wall-paper, and shining on polished furniture with foolish little gilt ornaments nailed over it. Perhaps that was the worst of it—that so sinister an atmosphere as enveloped this man could exist unweakened in such surroundings.

We both sat down.

"Is it cold in here?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes—no—"

"I thought you—"

"You know very well what it is. It is something that you know perfectly, that you are familiar with, that you could give a name to—"

He looked down at his hands for some time and finally said:

"Yes—yes. But how could I give a name to it so that you would understand? Here are we two, you of the West and I of the East. Our clothing, down to our skins, is of one sort, but beyond that we are at the two poles, one from the other—?"

"And still," he went on, raising his eyes to mine, "I cannot explain this: if we have nothing above material things in common, why is it that you alone, of everyone, have felt, in my company—?"

He stopped abruptly and, as once before, stared past me. He stared at the locked door. I saw plainly the emotions in him, as they were written on his face; first, expectation—a dreadful sort of expectation; then, slowly growing, a perception of something—something that he seemed to follow across the floor with his eyes. At that, the gaily papered, brightly lighted little room was, even to me, less empty, more fully occupied. He leaned toward me, grimacing involuntarily.

"Now!" he whispered sharply. "Now! You feel something—yes. But—try; can you *see* it?"

I felt quite cold all over.

"By the window," he rattled. "Can you see anything by the window?"

Very reluctantly I turned my head and stared toward the window. I saw nothing. But while I stared I felt a

growing relief greater than the relief of seeing nothing—as though that influence were slowly being withdrawn.

Hashimoto drew his breath with a little gasp.

“Nothing?”

“Nothing.”

“It is gone again—for the present—until you are gone, I think.”

Reaching over slowly, I took him by the wrist and fixed his staring eyes with mine.

“Now,” I said, steadying my voice, “now tell me what it is.”

He looked at me with his head half averted. Under the edge of his black beard I saw the pulse in his neck pumping.

“I was a brave man,” he muttered, choking, “I was a bold man. I was afraid of nothing. I laughed at the things my fathers believed. There was nothing to me more nearly supernatural than chemistry, nothing more uncanny than electricity. Now I am afraid all the time, and I know what I know. Yes—and at first I thought it was just remorse, remorse for what I had done, remorse that worried my brain and took a Shape, that strange lands and medicines would drive out—”

Suddenly he laughed harshly, jerked his wrist loose and flashed a revolver from his pocket.

“Medicines!” he barked. “This is the only medicine that—”

We rose up, locked together and straining. I tore the weapon out of his hand and threw him back into his chair. For a time we faced each other so, our breath whistling. At last,

“You are wrong,” he said, sitting up, strangely quiet. “I would not have done that yet. I have still an experiment of another sort to make. Do you know what I intend?”

“I think so, indeed,” I retorted.

“No, you are wrong. Now listen. When you go—after you are gone a little while, I am quite sure that I shall—not be alone. And then—well, when it comes, we shall see what six steel bullets will do.”

“Why,” I cried, “to destroy a hor-

ror that you can only feel creeping about you—that you cannot even see? You are mad!”

“If I am mad,” he said, “then we are both mad, for you know well that it is not in my mind alone. But you make a mistake; it is you who can only feel it, but—sometimes, I can see it.”

“You—can—see it?”

“Listen. You will not believe me; you will find it too incongruous. You will not believe that your eyes are less capable than an inanimate thing—but yesterday I photographed it.”

I laughed harshly, quite against my will.

“It was in the Botanical Gardens; imagine it, if you can, in the Botanical Gardens, in the full light of the afternoon. I had a camera which I bought yesterday for that purpose—to make an experiment, somewhat as a physician with an incurable disease makes experiments on himself. I took a picture in a lonely little aisle of hedge. It is against all reason, against even the reason of those who acknowledge the existence of such things, that the immaterial may be measured by the material. And yet, when I developed the film last night, there, against a hedge was an Outline, almost like a wisp of smoke, but caught—caught with a lens!

“Sometimes it is like that, very faint. Sometimes it is stronger, growing and fading. And sometimes I can see it as plainly as I can see you now, all except its feet . . . I can never see its feet . . .”

I sat down weakly and let the revolver slip away.

“What is it like?” I whispered.

He threw one arm heavily across his forehead.

“Ah! ah!” he cried out pitifully. “It wears my own face! It wears my face, my face when I was young! I think it is the ghost of my clean youth!”

He sobbed once, and it shook him.

“And yet whether it is that or something else, I do not know; for how can a man be haunted by a ghost of himself? There is one way—”

“Tell me,” I breathed.

“How can I tell you; how can I, who

was Shinto, tell you, who are Christian? How can I tell you those strange things that I believed when I was young, that I laughed at and threw away when the West came into the East? How can I tell you how a man might conceivably be haunted by a ghost of himself, by many, reproachful ghosts of himself, as he was in—other times? . . .

"It slips about in shadows, looking, looking, looking. It has a face sometimes very sad and sometimes terrible. Now and again the face changes, now it looks wiser than I ever was, now it seems to belong to a far greater man than I ever was. Sometimes I can see behind it, as if it were a mask hiding other faces, the fierce tiger eyes that I seem half to recognize, that might have belonged to ancestors, dead a long time, who were soldiers too, as I was a soldier—ah, *kawai-so ni!* As I was a soldier!"

I sat as still as death. Finally, "I cannot understand," I muttered dully.

"No," he said, "you cannot understand. You can never understand."

After a little while he rose wearily, picked up the revolver and slipped it into his pocket.

"But," he said, standing limply and looking steadily at me out of his sunken eyes, "some time, when I see It, even tonight, perhaps, I shall forget everything else but one and I shall shoot, to see if what I may catch with a sensitive film I may not catch with bullets, and so escape it."

"It is impossible. It is—all impossible."

"Yes. Everything that I have been through, in these months, is impossible. I live in an impossible hell, and you have stepped into it."

I got up slowly.

"Will you go with me tomorrow to a—very famous physician?" I asked him.

"Why," he said, "for what purpose? Are you such a fool that you believe, even now, that this is a matter for physicians?"

"No," I agreed somberly, "I know very well that it is not. But I was—"

"You were still clinging to your inheritance," he finished for me. "You were calling, for a last time, on training and common sense for help. There is no place, in this, for any of those things."

"I shall come to see you in the morning," I said presently, waking from a chilly reverie with a little start.

"I shall be here," he told me.

We parted at the door. I had a last glimpse of his deep eyes, his black beard straggling down his thin, corded neck, his hand with its wrinkled knuckles and long nails holding the door, clawwise. Then he went in and I heard the door click.

The lift was a long time in coming up. At last it rose, clanking, to the floor level. The door swung open with a crash. I was half through it when there sounded through the hall a muffled shot, a hoarse, choking shout, and then five shots, as close together as finger could clutch trigger.

The lift man and I ran neck and neck against Hashimoto's door. Another door across the way banged open; there was a scurry of feet up the hall; in five seconds there were half a dozen with us—men in pajamas, and waiters from the service. Three of us began pushing against the wood; it creaked and held. Then the porter came running with a pass-key and fitted it into the lock. For an instant he paused, finger on knob, and we all, our hearts thumping, listened. No sound.

Then he opened the door noiselessly and we filed in.

The room was full of smoke. Hashimoto lay on his face in the middle of the floor. There was no mistaking his huddled attitude. The revolver was gripped tight in his hand.

I could not look at him yet; in a daze I went over to the table and badly lighted a cigarette before I realized that it was one of the dead man's and put it down. I heard the porter call me.

"You were his friend, sir?"

"Yes—I suppose so."

"Come here a minute, if you please." They had turned him over. In the

middle of his forehead was a bullet hole; in the front of his body were five more.

"Look," whispered the porter, "there are no powder marks—do you see that? It's as though he was shot from a distance. If he had fired on anyone else he would have made such wounds; but, God! how could he have made them on himself!"

A lean, brown-faced man in pajamas got up and dusted his hands professionally.

"If," he said quietly, though his eyes belied that, "he could have stood off and shot at himself—"

"And—shot—at—himself," I gasped. "Ah!—"

I stared and stared at them all, my face, I know, as gray as Hashimoto's.



THE UNSPOKEN WORD

THERE was a word for thee,
My lips could not set free
In this confused sphere.
That word I yet must speak,
However far I seek—
That word thou yet must hear!

I, past the throb of time,
The bounds of space, must climb,
Since thou hast these outwon.
With fated errand fraught,
I, seeking thee, thou, sought,
We cannot be undone!

Thou, with no sensate ear,
My crying yet shalt hear
When lips of mine are dust;
That word thou canst not miss.
It is because of this—
In Immortality I trust.

EDITH M. THOMAS.



FIRST CLUBMAN—I see that Caryer's newly invented air-ship with a safety-clutch hasn't proved a success.

SECOND CLUBMAN—What's the trouble?

"The apparent absence of anything to clutch."

AFTER ALL

AH! after all our struggles and our prayers,
 'Tis only Love for which the future cares;
 Labor and Fame are steps along Love's way,
 And Art is but the garment that he wears.

ELSA BARKER.



A FABLE

THERE once lived a girl who was a great theorist. She had theories on housekeeping, diet, education, dress and love, which she took great delight in expounding to her family and friends.

Now, it so happened that, during a sojourn in a distant city, she met a very nice young man who became enamoured of her and whose affection she was inclined to return. But as she had a pet theory concerning engagements, she withheld a definite answer to his entreaties that she become his wife, and said:

"Although I love you, I cannot answer you in the affirmative until your affection for me has undergone a test. From what you have told me of yourself, you have associated but little with girls. How, then, can you be sure that your love for me will endure? Therefore leave me for one month, during which time no communication shall pass between us; associate with other girls as much as possible, and if at the end of that time your heart is still true to me I shall become yours for all time."

The young man protested and pleaded with all the ardor of love, but the theorist remained firm in her decision. Finally the lover bade her a reluctant adieu, and was off to keep the compact.

The weeks went by and the end of the month came. The theorist, who by this time, it must be confessed, had become exceedingly lonesome for the nice young man, attired herself in her most becoming frock and awaited with fluttering heart his coming.

A bounding step was heard on the porch. The theorist sprang to the door. A messenger-boy handed her a telegram. It read:

Test successful. Am engaged. Girl said yes at once. Has no theories.

MORAL—A bird in hand often flies out of the window.

BLANCHE GOODMAN.



FINE feathers make fine bills.

THE MAN ON HORSEBACK

By Elizabeth Duer

MAGGIE McGINTY was knowledgeable.

Mrs. Flannagan said so, and she ought to know, for she had played stork with all Maggie's nine little brothers and sisters, bringing one after another under her shawl as regularly as the year came round, and never failing to scold as if she had had nothing to do with it.

"Sure, it's a shame to you, so it is, Mrs. McGinty, to be putting more care on that poor child's shoulders, and on her only elivin years old!"

By the "poor child" she meant Maggie, who house-mothered at home, while her mother went out scrubbing by the day.

If *knowledgeable* means having the mental and moral equipment that best fits the human drudge to discharge its daily duties, then Maggie was knowledgeable; but she was not knowing. A more simple-minded person of eleven did not exist.

There was a male head to the McGinty family, an Irish giant six feet high, whose trade was that of a Long Island lobster-fisher, and whose inclinations were strongly bibacious. Both trade and inclination were apt to lead his feet away from home in the direction of Clam Bay—its waters and its saloons—and his absences were peculiarly agreeable to his family.

But one September morning that followed a night of convivial joy in Peter Daly's saloon and of crustacean disappointment in his lobster-pots, McGinty came home with a lurch that just hit the open door of his house, and made straight for the family savings-bank in the cracked teapot on the dresser shelf.

Mrs. McGinty, who for reasons best known to herself was not out scrubbing, attempted to remonstrate, and was promptly knocked down, while her better half made off with the spoils. The ten children looked on round-eyed with surprise, but from Maggie to the year-old baby there was not one who durst so much as scream.

Leveler heads than McGinty's have been turned by the sudden acquisition of ill-gotten wealth, and so his subsequent conduct need cause no surprise. He returned to "Pete's," where he treated the company several times over—and himself, by the same token—and went out in the cool of the afternoon to set his lobster-pots; but the waves of Clam Bay kept up such a jiggling that no light-hearted gentleman could maintain his balance in a boat, and McGinty fell overboard head foremost, and they never found so much as his boots, for he was drowned and his body swept out by the tide.

The news was told indiscreetly to Mrs. McGinty, who was taken with paroxysms of grief and called loudly for Mrs. Flannagan, and that goose of a woman, instead of trying to comfort her friend in this new trouble, only added to it by bringing another baby! She did it surreptitiously, too, while Maggie and the other children had just strolled down to the water's edge to watch the company from Pete's dredging the bay for McGinty's body.

When Maggie returned at supper-time and found "number eleven" asleep in the clothes basket, the surprise was in the nature of a shock. She told Mrs. Flannagan plainly that she knew her "momma didn't want

any more, and that she had better take it back"; but for once Mrs. Flannagan was impatient and bade the knowledgeable child go and put her brothers and sisters to bed. Later she relented enough to explain that her "momma was dangerous, so she was, along of McGinty fists, and it was a howly blessing his body had been swipt away intirely, and thim saved the expinse of a funeral."

The public schools opened the next day and claimed most of the children, and Maggie, having provided them with a breakfast of scraps and her mother with some toast and tea, was forced to face the dilemma of an empty cupboard and an empty purse.

Mrs. Flannagan had been over to lend a helping hand and had borne off in her friendly arms McGinty No. 10, for he was a lawless person, who went on all fours into any mischief that was nearest, and so could readily be spared from home under existing circumstances. His banishment left Maggie free to attend to her mother, McGinty No. 11 and Patsy.

Ah, Patsy! He was Maggie's favorite, the sturdiest three-year-old in the neighborhood, so curly-headed, so pretty, so biddable, and then his amusements so easy to provide, for all he craved was noise and plenty of it. So when she had hung a tomato can round his neck with a cord—drum fashion—and furnished him with a pair of iron spoons, she knew he was off her mind for hours, and she could go foraging for food.

The best laid plans of childhood are subject to maternal meddling, and Mrs. McGinty, who, according to Mrs. Flannagan, had nothing to do "but to lay aff and injye hersilf," turned querulous and called to Maggie that "her two ears was driv' in with the nise."

Maggie, always resourceful, whipped up the drum-major and set him down outside the fence on the public road, with the injunction "to go aisly with the spoons, and to kape forninist the house, or the boogyma'n'd git him, sure."

She always used the adult McGinty brogue when admonishing—it carried weight—but for plain everyday purposes she could talk pure public-school American with the best of us.

The slight contretemps between nerves and the tomato can being disposed of, the question of food assumed a prominence that could only be met by immediate action; so Maggie skipped across the lots to a gentleman's place in the vicinity, and there, making her wants known to the gardener, was generously supplied—at the gentleman's expense—with an apronful of potatoes and ears of corn.

Even young legs sometimes feel fatigue, and Maggie, having put the corn and potatoes to boil, sat down on the doorstep to rest, while her mother and the new baby slept till the peace of her surroundings, the Sabbath calm that prevailed, clutched at her heart like a presage of evil. How could she have forgotten Patsy? Where was he?

Opening the gate, she looked up and down the road in sickening alarm; and not a trace of his checked pinny was to be seen, not a vibration of his tin drum reached her strained ears. About any of the others she could have borne anxiety, but not about Patsy; he held her heart in the hollow of his dirty little hand; she loved him with old love and young rolled into one.

Down the road she ran in breathless haste, while visions of kidnappers and strolling bears and, what was even worse, the drowning propensities of Clam Bay, forced her into fresh exertion every time her tired feet felt disposed to lag.

She had run over half a mile when she heard a horse's hoofs coming after her at a fine gallop, and turning round she saw a gentleman mounted on an enormous bay, riding full tilt as if he meant to get all the exercise he could in a circumscribed time. He was a person of powerful build, and on horseback looked taller than he was; his face was strenuously kind, strenuously intelligent, strenuously deter-

mined, and the eyes, which were partly concealed by eyeglasses, were full of a kind of dreamy humor. He wore a slouch hat, a flannel coat buttoned over a soft shirt, riding breeches and boots. He and his horse appeared to be on admirable terms, for though they were enjoying themselves, both knew simultaneously that Maggie needed help, when they heard her hard-drawn sobs, and so they pulled up beside her.

"What is wrong, little woman?" asked the gentleman sympathetically, his expansive smile revealing a handsome set of teeth.

"Patsy's lost," panted Maggie, while she wiped her eyes and nose with the end of her apron.

"Is Patsy your brother?" asked the gentleman. "Where did he go? How old is he? What did he have on? I'll go and look for him."

"He mostly runs away toward Clam Bay," said Maggie, forgetting to add thank you, "and he has got on a tomato can."

"And if I find him, where shall I return him?" said her interlocutor.

"To Mrs. McGinty's—right beyond on this road," she said, pointing backward. "Then I'll go back to momma," she added, looking happier.

"Yes, you go back, and I'll find him, if he is to be found." He smiled in the reassuring way he had, as if he were accustomed to having other people's burdens put on his broad shoulders, and bearing them manfully. He nodded as he started off, and the horse nodded too. Evidently they meant to find Patsy.

Maggie set off for home, but with little spirit. The sun was getting warm, and her worries seemed to take on an actual avoirdupois; that is one of the mean characteristics of worries, they always take advantage of physical ineptitude to make themselves peculiarly crushing. The knowledgeable child could not help remembering that when the corn and potatoes had been eaten for dinner there was nothing more to cook. Her father had taken the savings, and her mother

wasn't working, and the prospect was dismal.

When she reached the cottage her mother was asleep, but McGinty No. 11 was howling. It was wonderful what those little lungs could do in the way of noise.

Maggie picked him up, and, rolling him in a shawl, head and all, went about the kitchen attending to little duties, till she heard horses' hoofs stopping at the gate, and then, with the baby still in her arms, she ran out to see whether Patsy had been found.

There he was, seated before the gentleman, proud as a peacock, with the tomato can still round his neck, and the iron spoons protruding from the gentleman's pocket. They seemed on the most intimate terms, for the gentleman's arm was round the boy, while clutching his sleeve were Patsy's dirty little hands, and he did not seem to shrink from their contact. Perhaps some private experiences of his own may have taught him that the affinity between dirt and small boys must be recognized even in the best washed families.

"Here is your brother," he exclaimed. "I found him following a hand-organ, but he consented to share my saddle. He is going to be a rough rider one of these days—hey, Patsy? Or would you rather shoot bears?"

"Shoot bears!" Patsy grinned.

He felt the devil of a fellow up on that great horse, and what was more, he did not mean to get down. The gentleman tried to drop him like a kitten to the ground, but it was of no use; he clung apishly to the front of the saddle. His prehensile powers were phenomenal.

There was nothing for it but to dismount and lift him down forcibly, and so in a minute the gentleman was standing beside Maggie at the gate, while she managed to say "Thank you."

"You are welcome," he answered, and then added, looking curiously at her bundle: "Surely that is not another brother you have rolled up in that shawl?"

The child's smile betrayed regret and

pride; one sees the same smile on old, old faces when they become boastful of their years.

"It's me brother," she said, "and there's another between him and Patsy, and sivin in school and me."

"De-lightful!" exclaimed the gentleman; "a good old-fashioned family. Ten, you say?"

"Elivin," corrected Maggie, and sighed as she thought of the potatoes and corn.

A wail came from the shawl. Maggie said, "Zum, zum, zum!" as if she were a bumble-bee on a pane of glass, and shifted the bundle from the horizontal to the perpendicular.

"Perhaps he is hungry," said the gentleman.

"They are all of them that," said Maggie, "and it's little enough they'll be getting today."

The gentleman took a roll of bills from his pocket, and, counting out several, said in the authoritative tone of a person accustomed to being obeyed:

"Tell your mother to come out and speak to me."

"What's the use of me telling her?" asked Maggie. "She's been in her bed since the baby came yesterday. She's always like that when they first come. I guess they kinder discourage her till she gets used to 'em!"

The gentleman did not seem a bit surprised; it made Maggie wonder whether Mrs. Flannagan had been up to some of her stork tricks in his nursery.

"Very well," he said, "I would not disturb her for the world. But you can give this money to your father when he comes in, and tell him I congratulate him upon his fine family, and that if ever the twelfth little McGinty arrives and he will let me know I'll make it worth his while."

"Poppa's dead," she said, looking longingly at the money. "He got drownded yesterday."

"Dear, dear," said the gentleman, "this is a sad state of things!" And once more the roll came out of his pocket and another crisp note was separated.

"This is for your present needs, child," he said, giving her what he had first intended; "and when your mother is better give her this"—adding the extra largess—"but be sure not to say anything about my message."

Maggie's eyes were dancing with gratitude.

"Deed, and I will, then!" she exclaimed. "That ain't much to do. I'll tell her about having *one more*, and I know she'll do her best to oblige you."



AS ALL GOOD WIVES SHOULD

NODD—What is your wife doing in Europe?
TODD—Me.



FIRST ARCTIC EXPLORER—How far North did you get?
SECOND ARCTIC EXPLORER—Just beyond the lecture line.

THE HAUNTED WOODLAND

By Madison Cawein

MY soul goes out to her who says,
"Come, follow me, and cast off care!"
Then tosses back her sunbright hair,
And like a flower before me sways
Between the green leaves and my gaze:
This creature like a girl, who smiles
Into my eyes and softly lays
Her hand in mine and leads me miles,
Long miles of haunted forest ways.

II

Sometimes she seems a faint perfume,
A fragrance that a flower exhaled
And God gave form to; now, unveiled,
A sunbeam making gold the gloom
Of vines that roof some woodland room
Of boughs; and now the silvery sound
Of streams her presence doth assume—
Music, from which, in dreaming drowned,
A crystal shadow she seems to bloom.

III

Sometimes she seems the light that lies
On foam of waters, where the fern
Shimmers and drips; now, at some turn
Of woodland, bright against the skies,
She seems the rainbowed mist that flies;
And now the mossy fire that breaks
Beneath the feet in azure eyes
Of flowers; and now the wind that shakes
Pale petals from the bough that sighs.

IV

Sometimes she lures me with a song;
Sometimes she guides me with a laugh:
Her white hand is a magic staff,
Her look a spell to lead me long:
Though she be weak and I be strong,
She needs but shake her happy hair,
But glance her eyes, and, right or wrong,
My soul must follow—anywhere
She wills—far from the world's wild throng.

Sometimes I think that she must be
 No part of earth, but merely this—
 The fair, elusive thing we miss
 In Nature; that we dream we see,
 Yet never see; that goldenly
 Beckons; that, limbed with rose and pearl,
 The Greek made a divinity—
 A nymph, a god, a glimmering girl
 That haunts the forest's mystery.



A ROSY FUTURE

HE—Dearest, I wouldn't dare tell you now just how dissipated my past has been.

SHE—Well, that will be something to look forward to.



IF NOT THERE, WHERE?

THE publisher had reached his office late, and there were signs upon his face that he had just passed through a strenuous experience.

"The trouble is," he said peevishly to the waiting author, "that you don't make the marriages in your novels happy ones."

He sighed.

"And the Lord knows," he continued, "that we've got to have happy marriages *somewhere!*"



MODERN ELOPEMENT

HE—Then you *will* elope with me, darling?

SHE—Y—yes, dearest—but oh, George—couldn't we at least send out cards announcing *that*?

THE EMPTY HOUSE

By Leila Burton Wells

MYRA had watched it building, from the ponderous stones which constituted its foundation to the little pinnacles and cornices decorating its roof.

It was one of the first stone residences built in San Francisco; and it stood like a monarch looking down scornfully on its homely wooden neighbors. Resting upon the crest of a high hill, lonely and isolated, as great things invariably are, it invited comment and admiration.

In the early morning, when Myra hurried by on her way to the factory, the sun touched its walls with a tender pink; and at evening, when she lingeringly passed it with weary eyes that barely took cognizance of house, or hill, or earth, or sky, she knew without seeing that it was wrapped in the shadowy arms of twilight. Blurred and ghostlike it stretched its outlines against the sky, the castle of her dreams!

Myra's life was all lived in that fanciful world which starved souls construct and people for themselves. Circumstances had forced her body into a sordid environment; but her mind soared blissfully into that land where ugliness is not. It left her not unhappy, though her life was brutally hard.

She was beautiful, in a way that appealed to no man of her class. Her eyes were touched with a patient wistfulness, and her sensitive mouth seemed to hold secrets between its softly closed lips. The mass of thick hair that swept back from her brow was powdered as if from a fall of snowflakes. She could not endure her cap in the

factory, and had watched with a sort of resigned indifference the gradual whitening of her young head.

Once, when the foreman had bidden her protect her hair from the bleaching lint that flew from the gloves in her hands, she had smiled slightly, and said, with a little weary flicker of her lids:

"What does it matter? A white head will not interfere with my work, will it? And the only thing that counts is how many gloves I get out a day."

And the man, after looking at her for a moment with latent curiosity, had shrugged his shoulders and passed on.

For Myra, life held no pleasurable future. She looked forward to days that would be no whit different from days that had gone before. Hope and expectation held no significance for her. Existence was simply a cross to carry and endure in patience until it pleased death to remove it.

She had been robbed of her parents when she was too young to realize her loss. Her father, an improvident artist, with neither the brains nor the courage to fight domestic finance, had ended his life rather than face poverty and possible disgrace; and her mother, finding herself too weak to cope with the duties her husband had shirked, had quietly followed him. But Myra was made of sturdier stuff. She examined the heritage left by her parents and, finding that it consisted mainly of a mass of debts, an old name and an artistic temperament, had realized that none of these would earn bread. She had quietly put them all aside and found her way to the factories.

By day her hands labored at their assigned tasks, and by night she snatched a meager education suited to her birth. It was the one concession she made to the things that had been.

Fortunately the temptations that beset other girls blessed—or cursed—with beauty passed her by. She was too fine to endure coarseness, and the men it would have been possible for her to love were removed from her by an impassable barrier. There is no surer safeguard to a homeless woman than refinement.

The walks to and from the factory held much to make Myra happy. She knew and loved every shrub and plant upon the way. The houses, the flower-crowded yards, the great silvery trees, were all friends to welcome her as she passed.

She never quite forgot the day that the first white stones were hauled for the house that was to enslave her fancy. How she watched it grow! Like magic the walls seemed to have piled themselves up. Myra grew to believe that somewhere far back in her mind she had always held a picture of just such a home—white and lofty and pure of outline.

It was almost finished now, and she had a little feeling of pain at losing it. For when it was peopled, when lace curtains fluttered against the windows, and proprietary feet passed up and down the stately steps, she knew that it would be no longer her own. Now it was masterless and mistressless, and it seemed to invite dream tenants.

In fancy Myra had fluttered softly through the rooms: that long, formal one belonged to the casual guest; it was pale and cold, and seemed to say "Good day and good-bye" all in a breath. The generous one, with its wide, deep windows fronting on the blue waters of the bay, was the library. There Myra's imagination ran riot. The rugs were soft and dim, and the chairs so very deep that they snatched one into their arms almost without one's own volition. The walls were fitted from floor to ceiling with books. Such books! Rare, they were, richly

bound, alluringly titled! Myra often lost herself there for days.

She decided that, were she the mistress, the quaint little room on the second story, with its bulging bay-windows, should be hers. She could sit there, she thought, and look over at the Golden Gate and dream. She should be robed like a princess, in filmy stuff that would float when she moved, and she should have bands of gold on her wrists and a thread of amethyst in her hair—and her room should be all warm and pink like the inside of a shell. Ah, that dreams should fade so quickly! The whirr of the machine, the curt rap of the foreman's voice invariably snatched her fairest vision. She came back to earth a little dizzy from the heights to which she had climbed and looked wearily at the factory room, with its row upon row of unsightly machines, its row upon row of tousled, becurled heads, its distracting, never-ceasing noise of running machinery. "Look on that picture and on this!" said her heart bitterly; and, looking, she sighed.

One evening near springtime she wandered slowly homeward, her feet almost refusing to bear her along. It had been a long and hot day, but now, as she lifted her face to catch the faint breeze from the sea, she put it aside as an evil thing that had passed. The sun was setting in royal splendor, and she could see from afar her fairy castle dyed in golden light. She quickened her footsteps and, gaining the hill, watched it lovingly.

Some workmen were putting away their tools, and they nodded to her as they trudged away. She crept nearer, scanning the great house eagerly. How she would love to peep inside! The doors had not been added, and who would be the wiser if she entered?

With a little tremulous smile she laid down her lunch-box. There was a board sloping from one of the doors to the ground in lieu of steps, and this she reverently ascended. There was no sound to disturb her save the rattle of the cable car whizzing down the street; but she felt guilty and uncom-

fortable, almost as if her intentions were evil.

The first room she entered was disappointing. It was big, bare and unfinished.

She looked toward the front of the house, and with little frightened swoops, like a bird fearing capture, she fluttered through the wide doorway.

Ah, here it was, just as she had pictured it! And the book-cases already in! She touched them softly, as one touches something he wishes to remember. How deep and wide the windows were, and how the sun was gilding them! She put her hands to her throat with a little gasp of ecstasy.

"Oh," she whispered, holding out longing arms, "you dear!"

Her voice rang hollow in the desolate room, and she suddenly shivered and tiptoed out to the hall. The stairs were broad and shallow. Instinctively her hand slid to the balustrade, and slowly she ascended. She put up her hand and took off her hat. One would not wear a hat in one's own house.

She crept slowly up, her eyes fixed on a rare stained-glass window, with its delicate blending of blue and gold. It shed on the stairway a cathedral light, soft and holy.

Suddenly she lifted her eyes, and a cry sprang to her lips. She had run into a belated workman, and she felt the terror of guilt. He was staring at her as if at a ghostly visitor.

"In the name of all that's holy, who are you?" he stammered, dropping his tools to the floor with a clatter.

She twisted her fingers together in an agony of shame and embarrassment. What explanation could she offer for her presence? What excuse could she make? She struggled to find her voice. It had deserted her in the most cowardly manner. She measured the man before her from under her drooped lids, and with a woman's ever-ready instinct to rob her foe of his strongest weapon—common sense—she let her lips curve into a little ingratiating smile. There would be time to make explanations

when she found he would not be beguiled.

She indicated the great hall with a charming gesture. "It is a beautiful house, isn't it?" she said irrelevantly, with a delightful air of friendliness, yet with the subtle condescension in her tone that a duchess might have used in addressing a plumber.

He regarded her with suspicion.

"Yes," he said quietly. "But would you mind telling me who you are and what you are doing here?"

She only smiled pleadingly.

"Are you a ghost?" he persisted, taking a step nearer. "Upon my soul, I thought you were one—with all that white hair and blue light. Where did you spring from?"

She slipped her hand back and forth on the polished balustrade and asked, with a suspicion of raillery in her voice: "Where do ghosts generally spring from?"

"You can search me!"

"You can hardly expect a well-regulated ghost to understand such language," she said gaily.

"Not a nineteenth-century one?" he asked.

She shook her head, still smiling.

"Well, then"—he leaned against the railing and looked at her—"I suppose it will have to be put more delicately. As I have never had the pleasure of meeting one, I do not know their ways. They usually make their exit in thin air, don't they?"

A mischievous light sprang into her eyes. She took a step backward.

"If you will promise not to watch too closely, I might give you an imitation of one making its exit."

He stretched out a detaining hand.

"I couldn't think of letting you go that way!" he exclaimed in mock horror. "There are doors, you know."

She smiled. "And no steps." Then she made a little gesture and the smile left her lips. "Please allow me to pass."

"One moment." He assumed the air of an inquisitor. "You have not yet explained your presence."

She gave him a reproachful glance.

He began to stammer an apology for his question. "I mean—I—what I intended to say is, that I cannot understand how you managed to get into the house."

"I managed to get in," she answered frigidly, "the way you did, I presume. It was wanton curiosity on my part. I have admired the house and I wanted to see the rooms. I realize now that I did a foolish thing, but—" Her eyes were wandering over his face and figure and she suddenly paused, glancing at the chisel on the floor. She was plainly puzzled, and continued, with a little angry note in her voice: "After all, if there is any apology due, it should be made to the owner of the house."

His flush betokened her advantage.

"Perhaps I might inquire," she went on coldly, "what you are doing here? I can scarcely believe that you are one of the workmen, for you have too much self-assurance."

He grew very red as he stooped to pick up the chisel. When he raised himself he looked straight in her eyes until they drooped before his. Then he said simply:

"I am an architect. I drew the plans for this building."

It was her turn to flush, and she did so generously.

"I beg your pardon," she said, with sincere contrition. "I was very rude—and all because I have no right here myself. I really am ashamed."

"There is no reason to be ashamed. You have paid the house a very high compliment. And so you like it?" He looked at her with eyes that were warm with feeling. He thought he had never seen a rarer face.

"Like it!" she clasped her hands together impulsively. "You have no idea how I have grown to love it! It seems foolish to take such an interest in another's property, I suppose; but"—she looked around the great hall lovingly—"have you ever imagined just the kind of house you would like to live in, and then watched someone pile it up, stone upon stone?"

He shook his head. "I am afraid

I haven't much imagination," he admitted. "And I am too selfish to take much interest in something that can never belong to me."

She made a little excited gesture. "But you could take an interest in this," she said earnestly, "for it really belongs to you. You dreamed it all—every line, every perfect room. What does it matter that another man inhabits it? It is yours, absolutely yours."

He laughed.

"I am afraid the owner might not see it that way. Mrs. Drayton is about ready to take possession; when she does my reign ends."

"Does it all belong to a woman?" she queried, looking about in envious amazement.

He nodded. "Yes."

Myra could not resist a small sigh. "I wonder if she will appreciate it?" she asked wistfully. "Rich people don't care much about their things, do they? Perhaps she has other houses and will keep this closed most of the time."

Her eyes, lifted to his inquiringly, seemed to exact sympathy. He felt a little thrill he could not have explained. The weird beauty of her face entranced him. She was like a white orchid—rare, mysterious, sensitive—and she was within his reach! His heart bounded exultingly. She was poor, she was not eaten up with greed of gold. She would be content with what he could give her. He held out his hand.

"Have you seen all the rooms?" he asked anxiously. "You were coming up when I met you. Won't you let me show you the place?"

She looked up at him, desire written plainly upon her face.

"Have we time? Isn't it very late?" she asked, with a little dutiful hesitation.

He shook his head reassuringly, and pointed to the window.

"Look at the sun! There is lots of time. Let me help you—these boards litter the place up so. I want you to see the hall from here. Do you like it?"

She gave a contented sigh, and said softly: "You must be very proud!"

"I believe I am now. I may build other houses, but this one, I think, will be the fairest!" He paused and looked at her meaningfully. "Do you know why?"

A slight flush touched the girl's cheek. For the first time she realized that she was wandering through that great empty place with a stranger. She shrank a little from him and, ignoring his question, pursued her way in silence.

When they reached the quaint turret-room, the man led her in diffidently. He was determined to make no more mistakes.

"This," he said, watching her sensitive face, "is my lady's boudoir. Does it suggest all sorts of pleasant things to you—perfumes and pillows and laces? Can you see little satin slippers kicked about, and no end of delightful absurdities? It suggested them all to me when I planned it."

"Yes," she agreed ecstatically, "and—big, low window-seats right here—and a tea-table—perhaps. And—oh! it must be pink, a warm, soft pink." She turned to him indignantly. "I suppose *she* will have green."

"Don't make her out a philistine," he besought. "Besides, I can suggest—"

"As if any woman ever listened to a man's suggestions about her room!" she said scornfully. "Somehow it doesn't seem to belong to me any more. I can see a widow—you didn't say she was a widow, but I know she is—fat, fair and forty, lounging in my window-seat, and staring at my view, and fluffing up my pillows. I will never have a dream house again!"

There were tears in her voice and he dared not look at her. In silence they descended the stairs. Myra fairly rushed through the rooms. As they gained the doorway, she took one glance backward and her eyes grew heavy.

"I have lost it now," she said faintly. "It is my last illusion."

He held out his hand to help her

down the slanting board, but she pushed it away.

"I came alone and I can go alone," she said petulantly.

"Please take my hand!"

He stood below her, looking up into her face, and something strong and tender and masterful about him made her slip her fingers into his. He guided her gently down, and, still holding the grudgingly proffered hand, he said in a low voice:

"Will this house never see its ghost again?"

She shook her head. He bent still lower.

"Won't you tell me who you are, little spirit of dreams?"

She looked in his eyes for an instant, and then hurriedly snatching her hand, whispered:

"I am just—nobody. I must go now—and thank you—and—good-bye—"

And before he could grasp her she was gone, fleeing into the twilight like a veritable ghost. He stood looking dumbly at the darkening house. It was swathed in a veil of shadows—dark, empty, desolate.

All through the days and weeks that followed he sought her. No woman's face escaped his searching eye; but the crafty city hid its secrets well. Nowhere could he find a pair of wistful eyes shadowed by softly whitened hair; nowhere a spirit face with a mouth that trembled adorably.

After many months he saw a slight, black-robed figure hurrying along Market street late one afternoon. With a fierce beating of his heart he slipped up beside it, and bending down, whispered joyfully:

"Do ghosts walk in broad daylight?"

She started and stared into his face for a moment. While his eyes were blind with the joy of seeing her, she slipped from him—slipped like a shadow from under his very hands, and was lost in the crowd.

Again, coming home late one night, when the fog hung like a gray curtain over the city, he flung himself impa-

tiently on the front seat of a Sutter street car, to find beside him, within reach of his daring hand, the frail figure, the unforgettable eyes, the snowy hair.

He leaned close to her and the dense mist beat upon his face like rain.

"You cannot escape me this time!" he breathed passionately. And then as she turned away her head: "Am I hideous, or distasteful, or deformed, that you should shun me so? What have I done? Look at me a moment, you dream fairy, or I shall indeed believe that you are a ghost. Speak to me—please!"

A little demure smile curved her lips. "How absurd you are!"

"I know it," he agreed, trying to see her face in the misty light. "I was planned by an incompetent architect. It isn't my fault, you know. You are laughing—but I don't mind. I don't mind anything as long as you don't condemn me to wander any longer outside the Gates of Paradise."

"The Gates of Paradise," she said dreamily, looking at him for the first time. "We all wander outside, don't we?" As he made an impulsive gesture toward her she changed her tone and said, with a shy laugh: "Have you built any houses lately?"

"I wish," impulsively he asked, "that you would let me draught you a house."

Myra handed him her shabby purse.

"Open it!" she commanded.

He did so with reverence. It held two ten-cent pieces and a nickel.

"That is my capital," she said serenely. "Now do you want to build me a house?"

"More than ever. But it will have to be a small one."

"The only house I ever have," replied the girl, "will be the plain wooden one they put me away in."

"How dare you say such things?" He half stretched out his hand as if he would protect her.

She smiled and said reassuringly: "Don't look so tragic! It will probably be some time before I find that home. In the meantime—good-bye."

"You are not going?" His voice was painful in its alarm. "Don't slip away from me! Make me a friend! Take me into your dreams!"

Myra shook her head. "There are no men in my dreams," she said decisively.

"You might put one in," he implored.

She regarded him a moment with a strangely serious light in her eyes.

"The men whom I would wish to put in my dreams would never be content to stay there." She motioned to the gripman to stop the car, and her eyes met his for one brief second. "I work in a factory," she said, with a little proud lift of her head. "Now you understand. Good-bye."

Again she was gone! The darkness had swallowed her, and his dazed hands clasped the empty air.

He rode on and on in the lonely car. The mist turned into a fine rain, but he did not notice it. A factory girl! He smiled to himself in the darkness. What did anything matter, save the one stupendous fact that he loved her! Had she said, "I am a criminal," nothing would have been changed. The unchangeable thing was that he loved her! He adored the sensitive sweetness of her voice, the rare delicacy of her soul, the trick of turning her head with its burden of snowy hair.

He would haunt the streets until he found her. She could not elude his love. It would discover her, though she lay hidden at the farthest corner of the earth. He would look into her true eyes, and holding out his arms, say, "Come!" But would she come?

With doubting eyes he questioned the darkness, but it had no answer for him.

It was a holiday, and Myra had gone to the woods. The hollows of the hills were gaudy with *fleur-de-lis* and violets and swaying mariposa lilies. Her starved hands culled them with devout reverence, and a little prayer of gratitude in her heart that the flowers of the field belonged to the people, that there is no price put upon their heads, and

that work-hardened hands can gather them without let or hindrance.

Lately all things had taken on a rarer beauty to Myra; the sweet, damp woods full of mysteries; the sunlit hills, where the wind blew riotously, tearing at the flowers with playful roughness; the unfathomable sea, stretching farther than eye could reach to misty dream-shores. In her blackest days she had never failed to find some stray flower of happiness; and now there was ever a song in her heart!

The shadows lengthened. The pleasure-seeking crowds rolled back toward the city; but Myra, sighing, lingered. It was growing chilly, for a late wind had sprung up and the shadows were stretching bleakly over the hill. The sun was saying good-bye to the day.

All alone up the grassy slope she trudged. She dropped some of her flowers, and as she stooped to pick them up a man's hand closed firmly, possessively, over hers. She gave a startled gasp and all her burden of sweetness dropped to the earth.

"I have found you!" the man cried joyously, holding both her cold hands in his. "Do you think I will let you go again? Don't struggle—I love you! Ah, how white you are! Do I frighten you—you unearthly spirit? There, I will be gentle. Look at me, dear. Won't you speak to me, beloved? Can't you tell me that you will—care?"

She tried to still the wild beating of her heart.

"There is my car——"

"You shall not go alone. I will go with you."

"Not—if I say——"

"But you will not!"

He helped her on the car. The flowers lay forgotten on the ground behind them. They had served their purpose.

As before, the fog hid their faces, but nothing else separated them. She was trembling as with fear, she who had heard no love words in all her poor, starved life. His voice impor-

tuned her. His eyes devoured her face.

"Do you know," he whispered softly, "that for three long months I have searched for you? Is there nothing you can say? Look in my eyes and tell me. Can you trust me, and go with me where I go?"

"Where do you want to take me?" she asked, looking up into his face, her eyes already consenting.

"To a place very dear to me," he answered softly; "to a place I want my wife to see!"

Her voice came to him out of the mist, very faintly.

"It sounds sweet!" she responded in a little tremulous whisper.

He looked into her face and uncovered his head.

"Come!" he said as the car stopped; and, with her hand in his, she followed him.

The street lamps had not been lighted and the houses loomed like huge black shadows. They walked in silence. He led her up stately stone steps into a great hall.

"Where are you taking me?"

"Come!"

Up the shallow stairs they moved in the darkness, until he paused before an open door.

"Do you love me?" he asked fiercely, holding her back. "Do you love me?"

Silently she lifted her eyes to his, and, with a little unbreathed prayer of gratitude, he took her in his arms, half afraid she would slip from him even now.

After a moment, with a sudden happy remembrance of his part, he drew her forward. His hand stealthily pressed an electric button, and light burst upon them in a blinding flood.

"Look!" he commanded joyfully.

She was in the warm, pink room of her dreams. The pillows, the rugs, the very chairs, were all as she had pictured them. With a little cry of bewilderment she lifted her eyes to his.

"I—I cannot understand," she whispered, touching him fearfully. "Oh, make me understand!"

He caught her to him.

"Make you understand, you spirit! Can't you see? I said the house belonged to Mrs. Drayton; and Mrs. Drayton is my wife, or will be if she doesn't escape me again. Sweetheart, I did design the house; I was an architect, before they left me more money than I knew what to do with. I built the house after plans I had had in my head always; plans nobody thought worth the paper they were drawn on, in the old days. I built it, and I furnished it as I had dreamed it should be furnished; but, after all, it was empty. I had but piled up lumber and stones. I had reared for myself a home, and the silent walls mocked me. When you came, with your wistful dream-eyes, your voice that made all the music in the world sound harsh, I understood what my home lacked. In

spite of everything, I have made your dreams come true. Lift that dear face and tell me what you said about the occupant of this room. Is she fat—is she fair—is she forty——?"

For one moment Myra struggled in his arms, hiding her face. Then timidly she lifted her eyes to his. His face was warm with joy and love. The wonder of the life opening before her made her faint.

"You have indeed made all my dreams come true," she said, with a little, tear-washed smile. "And you have put a man into them, after all—a man that I dare not turn out!"

And as his laugh rang through the silent house she slipped her arms up and pulled him down.

She had indeed drawn him into the circle of her dreams.



AN ANNIVERSARY

I WONDER if the dead forget,
Or if they count, by earthly years,
Those milestones of our sorrows, set
By days of grief and nights of tears.

I wonder if the dead forget—
Or if in heaven you stole aside
To whisper down, with fond eyes wet,
"Poor boy! this was the night I died!"

CHARLES BUXTON GOING.



AN UNUSUAL CASE

PRISONER—Yes, I'll admit I killed my mother-in-law—but I'm sorry I done it!

HIS LAWYER—You are? Then perhaps I can get you off on the grounds of insanity!

STUDIO SWEEPINGS

By James L. Ford

BOB himself says that the story is not worth the telling; and in one sense he is right, for I hold that it matters precious little to an artist of his distinction whether or no he be bidden to those august revels in which members of the aristocracy mingle with persons of mere literary, artistic or moral worth. Nor am I willing to admit that even the famous Every Other Saturday Club, in which, as all the world knows, such alien elements as fashion and genius meet on terms of absolute equality, can bestow any *cachet* worth striving after on the men and women who are summoned to its meetings.

But it has been charged that it is because of the wounding of his wife's social vanity on the night of their first and only visit to the club, many, many years ago, that Bob does not hold to-day the same position in the proudest society of his native New York that he does in those greater and wiser cities of the old world in which his genius found full recognition long ago, and particularly in London, where he now lives and where both he and Kate are valued at their true worth. Therefore, I shall tell the story, if only to show that his wife has never been anything to him but a true helpmeet from the moment of their very first meeting. And above all do I desire to show that, although Mrs. Bob may be said to have burned her fashionably artistic bridges behind her in the few words that she uttered as we all withdrew from that long-ago meeting of the E. O. S. Club, it was not because of a wounded social vanity that those words were spoken, but rather from a feeling of intense

mortification, blended with rude disenchantment—a feeling which we all three shared.

But if I am to tell the story I must begin at the beginning instead of the end, and I shall enjoy the telling all the more because it will take me back to those never-to-be-forgotten days when the spring foliage of Washington Square, far greener and fresher than now, found a harmonious background in the gray walls of the old University Building, beneath whose roof good men wrote and painted and prospered, while others, and better ones, perhaps, suffered and starved with their unsold manuscripts and paintings—those unprinted, unframed skeletons of dead hopes and ambitions—heaped about them. For there were some to whom this ancient gray stone pile proved a grave, albeit it still lives in many brave hearts a hallowed memory of golden years.

Those were rare days, and simpler ones as well. There were no professional bohemians then, no women of society who used celebrities, either newspaper-made or genuine, as bait to lure desirable guests to their dull dinner-parties. We were not "in society," we of whom I write, but we had our own "crowd," a score or more in number—young artists and writers for the most part—who dined together nightly in the little French restaurant in Bleecker street. And one of us was Bob, now of international renown, but at that time an illustrator, working on the top floor of the old gray building where the light was good, the rent low and hope strong within many a young breast.

Not one of our crowd ever said anything against Bob except that, like most popular men, he was rather too easy-going in his choice of friends; and liable, unless sternly rebuked, to introduce undesirable strangers at the long table which we called our own and which served as a forum for our nightly discussions of art and letters—discussions in which the personal equation was a factor of no small importance.

Now, a crowd of this sort is apt to be more favorably disposed toward the innocent and diverting pose of neglected genius than to plodding, unromantic and persistent work; and, so long as Bob found plenty of time to stroll about from one studio to another, gossiping, smoking and now and then offering a word of kindly suggestion, inspired by keen and true perception and untinged by the slightest taint of envy, so long were we all agreed as to his admirable traits and the extraordinary work he would do “if he only had half a show.” But suddenly Bob ceased to stroll and smoke and gossip, and his words of kindly praise and suggestion were heard no more about the Square, for he had formed the habit of locking himself up in his studio early in the morning and remaining there hard at work till nearly dark, when he would quietly emerge and disappear, frequently in gala attire and invariably with his face turned toward the north.

Then came the news of his engagement, and we received it in a spirit of sour cynicism, while certain of our party who had previously essayed the marriage state had their say in regard to an institution that is commended as honorable by an Apostle who never tried it.

The day of Bob's marriage seemed to us one of the darkest ever known on Washington Square, and although we bravely drank his health that night in a wine superior to that served with the regular dinner, Jack Gopher, in a condition to which grief was not the only contributory cause, pathetically bewailed our friend's “awful fall from

grace,” and ventured the prediction that his wife would never “stand for the gang”—“small blame to her, either,” he added—and that the young couple would settle in a fashionable quarter of the town, there to be swallowed up in a heartless and frivolous society and lost forever to the little world that had its centre in Washington Square.

“Well, that's just what they ought to do,” said Trottles, a solemn ass who wrote essays on the relation of something or other to something else, and owed his foothold at our table to Bob's easy-going tolerance rather than to any personal fitness for the honor. At that time, all unknown to us, Trottles was posing in society as a bohemian of the Henri Murger kind on the strength of what he told credulous women about his association with us; and in the light of this later knowledge it is pleasant to remember that Jack Gopher put him on the suspect list on the occasion of his first appearance when he endeavored to introduce a little kettledrum chatter about the “spontaneity of art.”

“There's no reason why a man of Bob's talent and good looks who has a clever wife to help him along shouldn't be received everywhere,” continued Trottles, in the confident tones of one who knew whereof he spoke.

“And what will he do when he's received everywhere?” demanded someone in a sardonic voice.

“Why, paint portraits, of course,” replied Trottles. “Give a man as clever as he is the right social pull and he ought to collar more orders for portraits than he can attend to. There's only one way for an artist to get along nowadays, and that is to get into society.” And, dinner over, Mr. Trottles withdrew, remarking that he had promised to drop in on some friends in their opera-box, while we who had no opera-box to drop into dispersed to our several studios and lodgings, sorrowing greatly to think that a good man was to be lost to us through the unworthy social yearnings of a misguided wife.

Three weeks later Jack Gopher startled the assemblage at the long table with the news that Mr. and Mrs. Bob had come down to the Square that very day and leased that most desirable of all the neighborhood studios—the one with the splendid, unobstructed north light and the little suite of housekeeping rooms across the passageway. But even then we shook our heads and declared that if they did come down to Washington Square it would only be for the purpose of giving studio teas for Mrs. Bob's society friends, and that the "gang" had best consider itself down and out for good.

It was to this studio that I came the very next Sunday night at Bob's friendly bidding, and it was there, in front of a generous wood fire, with pipe and glass at my elbow and under the still more potent spell of Mrs. Bob's clear eyes and frank, unaffected smile, that I first realized that, of all the men I knew, whether of our crowd or another, this one was the most to be envied.

"We want you to help us with our house-warming," said Mrs. Bob. "I'm not going to let my husband drop his old friends just because he's married, but I'm afraid he's been altogether too good-natured, so I'm going to ask you to tell me all about everybody while you help me make out the invitations."

A fortnight later Bob threw open his big studio with a house-warming to which were bidden all the members of the old crowd, and which proved one of the most delightful affairs ever known in our quarter of the town.

And after it was all over and the last of the guests had departed we three sat down to a final glass before the dying embers, and in the talk that ensued before that hospitable hearth it was borne in upon me even more forcibly than before that there had come among us a woman who was destined not only to strengthen and mold the character of her brilliant, easy-going husband and bring out the very best of his latent possibilities, but also to

become a dominant power in the little world that we called "the crowd" and that had always loyally believed in him.

And as time went on and we came to know Mrs. Bob better and better, her many remarkable qualities of mind and soul impressed themselves more and more deeply upon us all. Possessing the true social gift in the very highest degree, she nevertheless placed art, whether of the pen or of the brush, above society; and, secure in her background of good American blood and decent upbringing, was never deceived by the pretensions of sham gentility. Broad-minded in matters in which the conventional woman is uncertain and squeamish, she was at the same time outspoken in her contempt for charlatanism of every sort, and as proud as Lucifer of her husband's immaculate purity and honor as an artist. Her feeling toward his craft or any other that responds to the touch of genius was that of an honest woman toward virtue. Quackery, faking and self-advertisement were to her merely so many degrees and forms of artistic harlotry.

Her qualities as a hostess were quite as remarkable as those virtues of sincerity, loyalty and kindness that she possessed in such an eminent degree, and as years went on she grew wiser and more skilful in the rare and difficult art of gathering her friends together and causing them to have a good time. She knew by instinct certain things that the latter-day de Staëls seldom learn until they are gray and toothless. For example, she comprehended the exact proportion of listeners to talkers necessary for good conversation; she never invited one Englishman to meet another; she never spoke highly of one musician in the presence of another; and above all, she never affronted genuine artists by inviting self-advertising quacks and poseurs to meet them and make capital from the association. At the risk of being set down as a liar, I am prepared to make oath that in the Mrs. Bob whom I knew at this time New

York possessed a woman who could not only distinguish between genuine achievement and shameless self-exploitation, but could even tell the difference between artistic or literary distinction and commercial success in literature or art.

How she contrived to escape it I do not pretend to say, but I do know that the microbe of social snobbery never found lodgment in her straightforward, clear-seeing nature. Too proud to make any effort to get her name on fashionable visiting-lists, she was at the same time too sincere to affect that contempt for fashionable people, simply because they are fashionable, that is in itself one of the most objectionable and patent forms that snobbery can assume. Untroubled by doubts regarding her own position or by vulgar longings for that fame which only the society column can bestow; rejoicing in her husband's devotion and love and in his growing fame as an artist as well; the mere thought of his being "taken up" or "patronized" by those who were his inferiors in everything save purse seemed absolutely loathsome to her. Her own pure instincts and the experiences of her brief married life enabled her to distinguish with an extraordinary degree of accuracy between the sheep and the goats, the wheat and the tares of cosmopolitan New York, and I have never known her to be fooled by any false standard of social values.

Having strong opinions of her own and a wit that could sting quite sharply when aimed at the poseur or the charlatan, it is not strange that Mrs. Bob should have made sundry enemies during the busy and happy years that lifted Bob from a mere illustrator in black and white to an artist deserving of instant recognition in any country—not excepting even his own. Nor is it strange that more than one of those who flitted through the big studio on the occasion of the Sunday-night parties was eventually dropped for good and sufficient cause, to be heard of or seen by us no more.

There was a certain Mrs. Jordan,

a human sensitive plant who went home early from the studio one night because she could not bear tobacco smoke, and who was supposed to wield such a vast influence in society that no artist could afford to offend her. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Jordan was at that time giving drawing-room talks on how to keep young and beautiful which were merely a blind for the hygienic undergarments which she was paid to exploit. Well, Mrs. Bob detected Mrs. Jordan in a flirtation with a vain and silly young painter who had a trusting, loving wife—"got her dead to rights," as Jack Gopher put it—and for this shameless conduct, coming as it did between man and wife, she wiped her name from her list and did not know her when she met her in the street.

Then there was Charley Plimpton, whose brazen effrontery in copying the work of his fellows through the medium of tracing-paper, and selling the awful hybrid result as his own drawing, had long been studio talk. He was dropped for that very reason and, what was more to the purpose, Mrs. Bob told him plainly why she had dropped him. As for Trottles of the red ears and complacent speech, who was writing art criticisms that did not belie his appearance, Mrs. Bob disliked him from the very first—she was a woman of wonderful intuitions—but it was not until his lust for social advancement led him to pay for social civilities received by bringing two undesirable young men of fashion to one of her studio-parties that this model hostess told him that he could no longer be a guest of hers. This happened just before the spring water-color exhibition, and I remember that in his review of Bob's work there exhibited Mr. Trottles noted regretfully the decadence of that once promising artist and intimated that some malign influence was wrecking his life. Then, too, she made short work of the few outsiders who had succeeded in imposing themselves on our little crowd in the French restaurant, and great was our rejoicing at their discomfiture.

Yet she nursed Jack Gopher through an attack of delirium tremens, set him on his feet once more and nerved him, with brave words of affection and encouragement, for a final struggle with the enemy—a struggle in which he gained the victory and she a loyal, grateful and devoted friend. It was Mrs. Bob, too, who befriended the pretty young French-Canadian model, who, after drifting about among the studios for a time, came to grief and would have gone the inevitable way of all her erring kind had not Bob and his wife taken her into their own home and kept her there until she could be sent back to her people in Upper Canada, sadder and wiser for her metropolitan experiences.

Yet such was the kindness of Mrs. Bob's heart that although she herself had remorselessly banished these and other offenders from the little circle in which she reigned, she never quite forgot them, and would inquire wonderingly now and then what had become of Trottles, whether Plimpton had learned to draw, or to what corner of the town Mrs. Jordan had betaken herself.

And so it happened that, under his wife's guiding hand, Bob continued to advance steadily in fame, material prosperity and actual achievement, a trio which seldom keep close company but which now for once seemed to go hand in hand; and at last the time came when he felt justified in taking the long-planned and oft-deferred trip to Italy and the south of France. It was during their absence that the Every Other Saturday Club was formed, for it was the winter which saw the beginning of the present *entente cordiale* between art and fashion, a winter that was marked by its intense, bitter cold. This exclusive and intellectual organization was widely discussed in the newspapers at the time of its formation, and tidings of its success and of the brilliancy of its meetings reached Mr. and Mrs. Bob in Florence, where he was painting and they were both trying to keep warm.

On their return home Mrs. Bob

questioned me about the club with an eager interest that showed plainly that she would feel gratified if her husband were invited to join it; and, knowing her to be above wire-pulling or social intrigue of any kind, I determined to seek the aid of that charming woman of fashion, Miss Anne Bostwick, known far and wide as the most brilliant young woman in New York society.

I am speaking now of the time when a few New York drawing-rooms first threw open their doors to singers and players—I have already recorded the fact that that winter was one of unusual distress and severity—and Miss Bostwick was already making herself famous through the charming little dinners which she gave, dinners at which at least one celebrity of some sort or other was served with the food and drink. In the naïve Miss Bostwick's lexicon, "celebrity" and "artist" were synonymous terms and meant simply a human being whose name had been printed in the newspapers or on posters a given number of times. The close season for Italian singers and Muscovite 'cellists and pianists is a very long one in New York; but writers, artists and actors were Miss Bostwick's prey the year round, and as an exhibitor of such she had gained quite a little local renown.

With Mrs. Bob's permission I invited Miss Bostwick to the next studio-party and carelessly mentioned the fact that she was a person of no small influence in the Every Other Saturday Club and a genuine lover of—one might almost say dealer in—social celebrities.

Although never a lion-hunter, Mrs. Bob had, during her half-dozen years of married life, formed the acquaintance of many clever and interesting men and women, and I well remember the gathering in the studio that Sunday night. Seated in a corner that was just outside the range of the fire-light was shy, sweet Mary Fallon, whose book of poems had already created so much talk among literary folk and awakened such wonderful expectations for her future. I re-

member that Miss Bostwick had never heard of her at the time and could not understand why so much attention was paid to her when there were so many persons present whose names were in the papers nearly every day. But a year later, at the time of Miss Fallon's death, her fame had reached even those remote shades of fashionable ignorance in which Miss Bostwick dwelt.

The most amusing man in the room —how he did make Miss Bostwick laugh!—was Jimmie Nimrod, who would be the best comedian in the world if theatres were parlors and the stage no bigger than a hearth-rug. With him came Grace Pendleton, sweet and beautiful as a fragrant pink and the most talked-of and most sought-after of young actresses. Bob and his wife had known her in other days and there had been one season when she "rested" until well into February and "visited" them, as they put it, appearing at their little parties in frocks which, in point of style and texture, were not unlike those that Mrs. Bob had been known to wear. I noticed that when Miss Pendleton entered the room Miss Bostwick simply gasped and held her breath, because, as she told me afterward, there were women of the highest fashion who would "give their eyeteeth" to secure this superbly beautiful creature as a dinner attraction.

But if Miss Bostwick held her breath when Grace Pendleton entered the room how shall I describe the effect produced upon her by the entrance of the great Carlotta, perhaps the noblest soprano that the town has ever heard, and one who always contemptuously refused to cheapen herself by posing in fashionable drawing-rooms! These, with a dozen or more artists, writers and stage folk who were agreeable as well as gifted, and a few lesser lights like myself, made up a little company of which any hostess might have been proud. We of the smaller renown soon found a safe anchorage in the dining-room, where we were joined later by such of the celebrities as had learned

that the cheering cup, despite all that has been said against it, is a better guide and friend than feminine flattery. Here we held high revel until Mrs. Bob came and drove us all back to the studio that we might applaud the music. And we applauded with a will, too, for Carlotta, incomparable of artists, could modulate her voice to the requirements of a teapot as well as an opera house.

Miss Bostwick was quite excited over the whole affair. Indeed, when I consider the women of today who assume the pose of a Madame Adam on the strength of an acquaintance with a single celebrity, my only wonder is that we should have taken it all as a matter of course.

"Why, I had no idea that your friends entertained any such people as that!" she exclaimed. "Miss Pendleton half promised to come to me a week from Sunday, but I don't feel at all sure of her, though I heard her ask Mrs. Bob, as you call her, if she might run in and have luncheon with her tomorrow. And to think that after all my vain attempts to meet Carlotta, I should suddenly find myself face to face with her here! Why, she never goes anywhere! How in the world did they ever catch her?"

But Miss Bostwick, though foolish and simple as well as brilliant, was always civil and well disposed, and the very next day Mr. and Mrs. Bob and I received an invitation to dine with her and attend the meeting of the Every Other Saturday Club. For once since her marriage Mrs. Bob accepted the invitation without waiting to consult her husband, and I magnificently offered to "give them a lift in my carriage," which unusual luxury had been made possible to me through a business transaction with a magazine that paid its contributors on acceptance.

We set out in high spirits and there was a sparkle in Kate's eye and a look in her lovely face a little unlike anything I had ever seen there before. But even at this moment her kind, pitying heart asserted itself and she

broke in upon my brilliant flood of persiflage and anecdote with:

"Do you know that at such moments as this I wonder what has become of Trottles and Mrs. Jordan, and those that we never see any more now! The same thought came to me the other night at the studio when we were all having such a good time and Carlotta was singing so splendidly. Sometimes when I think how nicely Bob and I have gotten along and how many of our good friends have been successful, I ask myself if it is possible that we were too hard on those sinners, and if we could not have reformed them instead of casting them out altogether."

"Nonsense!" cried Bob, "you never rendered me or the crowd a greater service than you did when you put the whole kit and boodle of them outside the studio door. If I hadn't been a weak, vain ass I would have cut Trottles's acquaintance long before I did, but I was looking for newspaper puffs then, so I tolerated him, and he served me right when he roasted me! I regard them all as mere studio sweepings."

"Nevertheless," said Kate, with a sigh of regret, "I can't help thinking of them once in a while and wishing that I could have reformed them. What a triumph it would have been, for example, if we could have taken them all up with us tonight and exhibited them to the distinguished people in the Every Other Saturday Club as examples of what can be done by kindness and forbearance!"

"You must tell us the names of some of the people we are to meet tonight," said Kate to Miss Bostwick as we four seated ourselves about the table.

"I'll do nothing of the sort," she made smiling answer. "Your party was all the more delightful because it offered such surprises as Carlotta and Miss Pendleton, and although I can't promise you any such treat as that, nevertheless, I believe this is to be a specially interesting evening and one that will bring out some of the most

remarkable men and women in the town."

As almost every other person in New York knows, the Every Other Saturday Club meets in the drawing-rooms of its wealthiest members, and tonight we found ourselves in the home of a famous Western capitalist on Fifth avenue overlooking Central Park.

It was indeed a beautiful scene that met our eyes. There were splendid pictures on the walls, for good taste can be bought and sold as well as coal and literature nowadays, and the great rooms were filled with men in evening clothes and beautifully gowned women. There were flowers everywhere and their scent filled the air.

Our hostess, a dumpy little woman with a kindly, seamed face and wearing a diamond necklace that made Mrs. Bob gasp with surprise, greeted us at the door with a smile of perfunctory welcome, and then we walked on down the whole length of the room, Miss Bostwick leading, and Kate walking behind her, erect and with a heightened color in her face that made it seem lovelier than ever before, while Bob and I brought up the rear, trying to look as if meetings of the Every Other Saturday Club were everyday matters with us. We seated ourselves together, and Miss Bostwick surveyed the company through a gold lorgnette.

"Do tell us who some of these people are," whispered Kate eagerly.

"There's one artist here that I particularly wish you to meet," said Miss Bostwick as she scanned the horizon through her glass. "You've surely heard of Plimpton, haven't you?"

"What Plimpton?" inquired Kate rather sharply.

"Why, the great and only Charles Plimpton, of course," replied Miss Bostwick. "There he is! Surely you must have heard of him! But perhaps he comes to your Sunday evening parties?"

And then, to our amazement, we saw Charley Plimpton, "the tracing-paper king," as Jack Gopher used to call him, standing in the centre of an

adoring group of women who were listening, tongue-tied, to his discourse.

"He doesn't come any more," said Bob grimly, and then Miss Bostwick saw by the look of annoyance on Kate's pretty face and the grin on my homely one that something was amiss.

"But you must admit that he's a very brilliant artist," she continued, "and that a great many of his pictures are very much of the same *genre* as your husband's. In fact, more than one person has spoken to me of the resemblance."

"They're as near as pencil and tracing-paper can make them," retorted Kate, and Miss Bostwick dropped the Plimpton school of art with a look of pained surprise, and, as the dime museum lecturer would put it, passed on to the next living curiosity.

"I don't know whether you ever heard of Mrs. Grinmore," she said rather guardedly then, gaining confidence as we all shook our heads. "I should like to have you meet her, for she's one of the most interesting women in New York as well as one of the leading members of the club. She's been in India for several years and has come back a firm believer in Squaabe, the new religion that so many really brilliant women have gone in for. She's been giving talks on it in any number of houses in Newport, and she's promised to address us here some night this winter. You must come to one of her studio evenings; they're simply charming."

"So, she's an artist, too?" said Kate innocently.

"Oh, no," said Miss Bostwick, "she believes in Squaabe; it's Mr. Plimpton who's the artist."

"Then what is she doing with a studio?" demanded Mrs. Bob.

"Doing with it? Why, just what everybody else does—giving receptions in it. They're delightful, too, except that she will insist upon smoking one of those great Eastern water-pipes that give out such an unendurable smoke. Why, here she is now! Oh, Mrs. Grinmore, I was just telling my friends

about you! You've heard of the famous painter, Mr. Robert——"

"Good God, it's Mrs. Jordan!" muttered Bob as a stout woman done up in endless yards of some clinging white stuff and wearing a turban on her head, bore down upon us with an admiring troop at her heels.

"Old friends of mine, I assure you," said Mrs. Grinmore, with fine assurance. "But I haven't seen you for years," she continued, beaming cordially on Mrs. Bob; "not since that funny party you gave with all those artists and queer people. Do you still live down in that part of the world?"

But before any of us could frame a fitting reply—I fell asleep that night thinking of forty things I ought to have said—the famous Mrs. Grinmore, erstwhile Mrs. Jordan who could not bear tobacco smoke, and came in between Tom Hinton and his sweet little wife, had resumed her triumphal progress.

"Why, I'd no idea that you knew her," said Miss Bostwick ingenuously, and just then a solemn hush fell upon the room as the president of the club mounted the platform and rapped upon the table with an ivory gavel.

"In presenting to you the speaker of the evening," he said, "I felicitate the Every Other Saturday Club upon its good fortune in being able to listen to one of the most thoughtful and scholarly students of art, literature and sociology that our country contains. For many years this profound thinker and fearless writer has been a dominant influence in the artistic life of our country, while his studies of how the other half lives have served to place him in the very front rank of modern sociologists. It has been said of him that he knows his New York as Dickens knew London and as Victor Hugo knew Paris, and the subject upon which he will address you tonight is 'Quaint Corners of Little Old New York.' Ladies and gentlemen, I take great pleasure in introducing to you Mr. Elisha B. Trottles."

We were still rubbing our eyes and pinching ourselves to see if we were awake when the once familiar face, with its serious expression, its framework of black, silky beard and its great flapping red ears, loomed up before us, to be greeted with a burst of welcoming applause.

"How perfectly delightful!" exclaimed Miss Bostwick, leaning forward with a look of interest on her sweet, simple face. "You know Mr. Trottles lived for years away down town, consorting with all sorts of queer people and making a careful study of their habits."

By this time the speaker had launched himself into his discourse, and very interesting indeed the members of the club found him. He described the Chinese quarter, mentioned the fact that there was a joss-house there and explaining that "chop suey" was the name of a favorite Celestial dish. Then he passed on to another of his quaint corners, the Italian settlement on Mulberry Bend—which he had once visited in company with a detective. The place is about as safe and peaceful as Union Square. From the Italian quarter it was but a step to the Ghetto, the "congested district," the Yiddish theatre and the marionette theatre—in short, everything that is discovered by clergymen and reformers, and not unlike the stories of local life that are unloaded on the new Sunday editor.

I have said before that Trottles was a solemn ass. We all knew it years ago, but in those simpler and merrier days the term was used as one of reproach. It remained for the Every Other Saturday Club to teach us that although in the fashionably intellectual world the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong, the prizes and emoluments of both are the acknowledged perquisites of solemn asininity.

Having disposed of the congested district and its immediate neighborhood to the complete satisfaction of his audience, Mr. Trottles betook himself to another of the town's quaint corners and introduced us to "bohe-

mia." "Here," said Mr. Trottles, "one may meet young men who, though poor and oftentimes ragged, frequently display genuine ability in different forms of art." He assured us that he himself had dwelt in this bohemia that lies to the south of Washington Square, had eaten and drunk with its inhabitants and associated with them on terms of perfect equality.

"Of course," he continued, "I was in a certain sense incognito, and I often wondered what those young men would have said if they had known that frequently after eating their humble dinner, I had gone direct to some scene of fashionable gaiety. I discovered long ago," he added modestly, "that it does not do to assume airs of superiority, no matter what company you may find yourself in."

I did not dare to look around at Kate, but I could hear Bob breathing hard.

Mr. Trottles then described in detail the fifty-cent dinner with which he was wont to pretend to satisfy his appetite in the Bleecker street restaurant, and I judged from the whispered expressions of amazement and incredulity which I heard on every side that familiarity with the commonest phases of New York life was not the long suit of the Every Other Saturday Club. He spoke with sad regret of the habits of his one-time bohemian friends, many of whom, he said, were addicted to drink, and, when in their cups, were inclined to be rude and irreverent. They frequently spent all their money for rum and were unable to settle the demands of the gas company, thus compelling that benevolent corporation to shut off their gas at the meter. But even that drastic measure did not seem either to annoy or sober them, and they would continue their carouse by candle-light. Then, all unconscious of our presence, this misguided Trottles brought his discourse to a close with a touching reference to a once gifted artist who by an unfortunate marriage had ruined a most promising career and was still living in the same region where he had known him years ago, although if he

had remained single and persevered diligently and soberly, he might in time have been able to move up to the fashionable Fifth avenue district where the prosperous portrait-painters dwell.

There was tremendous applause when the discourse reached its close—applause in which Miss Bostwick joined with much enthusiasm.

"What a life that man must have led!" said a woman just behind me. "I wish he'd told us something about the women bohemians! I suppose there are a lot of actresses and models and such creatures that consort with them in those restaurants."

"Come," said Kate, rising, "we must go."

"But you must stay and meet Mr.

Trottles," said our hostess in polite remonstrance.

"Thank you," said Kate, "we *have* met him."

"I declare," said Miss Bostwick, "it's no use trying to surprise you at our poor little club, for you know all the interesting and charming people in town. After all, Mr. Trottles and Mrs. Grinmore and Mr. Plimpton are what you might call bohemians themselves, aren't they?"

"Bohemians!" repeated Kate thoughtfully. "That word has certainly been stretched of late years so as to include almost anybody, but I doubt if even yet it reaches as far as Mr. Trottles and Mr. Plimpton. No, not quite bohemians. I should call them just studio sweepings."

THE HUNT

HARKEN the hounds on the waters tonight,
Baying the stars as they hurry and flee!
Stirring remembrance and blurring delight,
Triumphs the trumpeting sea.

Gale upon gale rises foaming, and fills
Sail after sail sweeping over the lee,
While in the darkness, now calling the hills,
God goads the galloping sea.

WILLIAM GRIFFITH.

MENTAL TRAINING

MOSE—When did Jim Jackson commence taking memory lessons?

PETE—Why, Jim's been taking dem blame lessons so long dat he can't remember when he *did* commence.

THE SEA-BORN

By Theodosia Garrison

THE breath of the sea will set me free,
And its waves will wash me clean,
And a man shall rise in his olden guise,
And forget what his eyes have seen.

The inland woman's hair was dark
As clouds that hide the moon;
Her face was white as far starlight,
Her voice was like the tune
Merwomen sing for shipwrecking
In languid nights of June.

She lured me from the clean, green sea
And from the strong, white sand;
Bereft of will I followed still
The waving of her hand;
As some gull's flight against the light
She drew me to the land.

A windless land of drowsy ease,
A land of scent and heat,
Where everywhere the perfumed air
Clung motionless and sweet,
And dragged the might that fain would smite,
The feet that would be fleet.

The moon came softly up at night
As a rose blossoming,
And all its beams were white-armed dreams
That wove a mystic ring,
Wherein my soul, that once was whole,
Lay like a dying thing.

I had forgot the strong, white sand,
Forgot the clean, green sea,
Forgot how good the manlihood
Of stress and strife might be.
'Twas one gull's flight across the night
That stirred the blood in me.

Seaward against the night it beat
 From lands of scent and song;
 Seaward it flew, and straight I knew
 What bore its wings along,
 For suddenly there breathed on me
 The sea-wind keen and strong.

I loosed the inland woman's arms,
 Her crimson, kissing lips;
 As winds break forth from the gray North
 To drive the anchored ships,
 So this wind rent the bonds that bent
 About my soul's eclipse.

The free sea called me from afar
 With a great voice and true;
 I felt the blood of brotherhood
 Thrill in my veins anew;
 The kindred tie it held me by
 Drew me as strength might do.

I will win back to the open sea,
 Back to the strong, white sand;
 As a soul may rise to its Maker's eyes
 Shall my soul naked stand.
 Only the sea shall chasten me,
 Only the sea command.

Out of the scented night I come,
 Out of a listless sleep,
 To eager days and boundless ways
 And winds that laugh and leap,
 Where work is done in open sun
 That hath no sins to keep.

*The breath of the sea will set me free,
 And its waves will wash me clean,
 And a man shall rise in his olden guise,
 And forget what his sin hath been.*



“YOU know she really writes charmingly, but she is so discouraged about her poetry.”
 “People who write poetry ought to be discouraged.”

APPLES OF EDEN

By Catalina Páez

HOLY and serene on his shelf by the window, and all unconscious of coming ill, brooded the little wax St. Joseph. The long, high *sala*, its heavy shutters closed against the noonday sun, stretched below him into cool obscurity, the bent-wood chairs and gaudy gilt mirror melting into shadowy vagueness. Slowly, and very gradually, a beam of light crept in from the *patio*, and struck across the room in an ever-widening stream that poured its rays, like a halo, upon him; slowly and very softly the *patio* door was opened, and two small figures entered the sacred precincts of the parlor, and stood for a moment, irresolute at the doorway. Josefito had valiantly attempted to stride across the threshold, but the effort was humiliatingly unsuccessful, and he slunk back against Pepita, whose dismay was genuine and undisguised. Thus might Eve have stood when, fruit in hand, she paused for a moment before tasting.

A parlor is a holy and forbidden spot, sacred to visitors and special occasions. One's appearances there are subject to royal command, and invariably preluded by great personal torture, so that one enters low-voiced, subdued, shining, stiff with starch and propriety; thereupon to go through new tortures of a different variety, consisting of kisses—double Caracas kisses, one for each cheek—and biographical anecdote in maternal accents. Occasionally there is balm, which is quicker than that of Gilead and more acceptable, in the form of guava jelly and *papelón* water, whereof one partakes plentifully when the visitors are many

and their contributions generous; but this solace is not always forthcoming, whereupon life becomes distinctly unendurable, and one subsides into gloom and an uncomfortable chair. Today things were different; the pair had come uninvited, unannounced, unwashed, and in open defiance to parental commands, but still they paused for an awesome moment at the doorway, overcome by the force of painful associations. For a brief instant the heart of the renegade Josefito smote him.

For seven monotonous years Josefito had pursued an uneventful existence in peaceable amenity to authority. His goings out and his comings in, his uprisings and his retirings were fixed by custom and those above him, and these he accepted as blindly and unquestionably as he accepted his small linen blouses, or his morning rolls and chocolate. They came, he knew not whence or how; like so many other things they simply *were*, and formed a part of every well-regulated existence. For him the whole system of ethics was comprehended in one all-important principle, obedience—and beyond the pale lay darkness and degradation. Dire and humiliating were the penalties which attended lapses from virtue, and virtue meant non-infraction of rules; so, partly from long fixed habit, partly from fear of consequences, Josefito passed his days in unimpeachable submission to regulations, and did all things as directed. To be sure, he had experienced many falls from grace, but these had been accidents due more to malapprehension or faulty execution than to any distinctly evil

intent. He had often failed, but never had he been openly defiant.

Perhaps it was because he had recently attained the age of sin and reason; perhaps it was because he lived in a country of revolutions; perhaps it was the proverbial Satanic visitation which descended to punish lack of occupation; be these things as they may, Josefito, lounging with Pepita in the corridor, was suddenly seized by the demon of insubordination. It was noon of a hot day, and the children had raced themselves into a fever in the *patio*. They should have been taking a *siesta* at this hour, but mama had gone to La Guayra, and nobody remembered. The corridor was torrid and uninteresting, and Josefito mopped his purple face and kicked his heels against the chair legs. A warm breeze stirred in the fig tree, and drifting down through the arches, stopped at the door of the *sala*, and swung it gently ajar. Within abode quiet and coolness, and a region of many enchantments; tall, sparkling mirrors, wherein one had never been permitted to view oneself, picture-books one had never dared to open, curious objects forbidden to handling; and above all, a wonderful basket of fruit, luscious looking and inviting, which one had been told was not nature but wax. Josefito was sure that they would ooze juice if he touched them, just one little touch with a finger-tip, but an inexorable injunction had always withheld him. He sprang to his feet in the strength of a sudden resolution: it was forbidden, that he remembered; it was naughty, that he knew; it was disobedience, that he avowed; but the spirit of independence had come upon him.

"Pepita," he said, "we are going in."

Pepita, cautious and virtuous, broke forth into expostulations, but Josefito listened not, neither did he stay. He seized his sister's hand and drew her across the threshold, and St. Joseph, beholding, grieved at such measureless iniquity. Then, as previously chronicled, the renegade Josefito paused for an awesome moment in the doorway.

It is not easy suddenly to cast off the shackles of convention, and to defy the traditions of a lifetime, even though that lifetime be measured by less than a decade. Josefito was not afraid—oh, no!—but just for a moment he wished that he had not come. It was not so very nice here, after all. The *sala* was majestically gloomy in the half-light, and Josefito's apperceptive faculties immediately peopled it with disquieting reminiscences. Consequences, too, loomed vaguely somewhere in the beyond—and here all hesitation vanished. Was he to be abashed thus? In his veins coursed the blood of revolutionists and *conquistadores*—doughty grandees of old Castile, who had tilted at legions or at windmills with the same valiant disregard of consequences. He was not afraid, and he would prove it to the world, and to Pepita, whimpering and cowering beside him.

So he set his jaw, squared his shoulders, and pushed through the open doorway; while Pepita, true to her tribe, wept at the iniquity of man—and followed him. No cherubim with flaming swords appeared to keep the way; only St. Joseph mourned in his niche by the window.

The next few moments were devoid of incident. The delights of Eden are not immediately manifested to the newly arrived. Josefito seated himself precipitately, and kicked his heels against the chair legs, precisely as he had been doing in the corridor during the past ten minutes; although this time there was a certain morbid satisfaction accruing from the knowledge that they were polished chair legs, and his heels were most undoubtedly making scratches. All of which would call for accounting later—but on such unpleasant topics Josefito did not permit himself to dwell. The Day of Judgment looms beyond all things, a dread and abiding certainty; yet, who of us permits himself to be daunted of pleasures thereby? Knowingly, do we scratch the varnish, and yet somehow hope through it all for immunity.

Chair legs, no matter how interest-

ing, soon pall, however, and Josefito slid down to more accustomed levels on the rug, where he began to play ostentatiously. He had come hither in search of enjoyment, and enjoyment he proceeded to conjure by methods as strenuous as unaccustomed. He turned the stately rocking-chairs into prancing steeds, and charged down upon imaginary hosts, as valiantly as did ever the Knight of La Mancha astride his renowned Rosinante. He stood on his head and juggled sofa cushions with his feet until his ears and eyes tingled with the blood that filled them; he played leapfrog with the piano stool; he gamboled about under the leopard skin rug, with growls so realistic that Pepita fled shrieking in mingled terror and delight. Finally he pulled a flimsy red something from the piano top, and waving it frantically before an elusive bull, pranced and danced and doubled, until with a dexterous sword thrust he made an end to his adversary.

Then the valiant *espada* sank in a heap on the floor, and panted. He was enjoying himself mightily—most certainly he was enjoying himself, but it was growing a trifle warm, and it was tiresome playing alone, anyway. If only Pepita were not a girl and a coward—Hereupon his eyes sought out Pepita, who stood at the centre-table, in rapturous contemplation of the wax fruits.

They lay in a gilded basket, its handles twined with ribbon, surmounted by a glittering crystal dome which screened them from dust and desecration. A wonderful collection, truly! Hard, shining mangoes; luscious-looking figs; prickly pears that seemed really to prickle; and guavas which conjured up distinct visions of jelly. These and many others no less tempting lured on the unwary to destruction. For as long as they could remember Pepita and Josefito had secretly covetted this treasure, their mother's most cherished bit of ornament; Pepita's desires being directly associated with doll's housekeeping, while Josefito longed for an opportunity to test

a private and particular theory of his own.

"They're real inside, Pepita," he had often averred. "They must be real, else they could not look so natural."

But Pepita, less imaginative, was skeptical.

"They'd never keep—how could they?" she would invariably rejoin.

"It's the wax," was the explanation. "That always makes things keep. Don't they put it round the top of preserve jars and pickled peppers—and don't they keep? Of course, they're real, and some day I'll eat one, just to show you."

Now was his chance! He scrambled to his feet, and joined his sister at the centre-table. Pepita stood speechless with terrified amazement when she saw him lift and lay aside the glass cover; but when he dragged the basket perilously close to the table's edge, and began picking over its contents, she managed to gasp out:

"Oh, Josefito, you'd never dare!"

Fatal interference! Ill-chosen remark! Had Josefito wavered, all hesitation were banished now.

"Dare? Of course I dare! Just see me."

He seized a particularly tempting guava, surveyed it for a moment of rapturous expectation, then crammed it whole into his mouth. There followed a moment of awesome silence. Josefito munched violently; then of a sudden his jaws slackened and his expression changed from the extremity of satisfaction to dire distress. He choked, he sputtered, he coughed, and finally he lifted both hands quickly to his mouth, thereby releasing his hold upon the basket. It quivered for an instant of uncertain equilibrium; Pepita sprang forward with a scream—but too late! The basket crashed to the floor, and the wax fruits shattered into nothingness.

Josefito stood dazed; the enormity of this misfortune almost overwhelmed him. He had broken his mother's cherished fruits, her pride and the envy of her neighbors. And he had

done it through disobedience, wilful, flagrant disobedience. What would his mother say? What would she do? What would become of him, anyway? He could hear the splash of the fountain in the courtyard. He had once heard of a boy who was drowned in a fountain. People said it was an easy way to die, and it would be all over in a minute. Perhaps when she surveyed his lifeless body down among the goldfish his mother would forgive him. And they would lay him in a little white box, with candles at each corner, and there would be innumerable tall jars of tuberoses standing about the room, and his mother would cry—here he drew a deep sob—and tell people what a good boy he had been. Only he hadn't been a good boy, for he had disobeyed, and broken his mother's fruits, and they lay all over the floor, and he didn't know what to do—

And here, borne down by the weight of his afflictions, Josefito cast himself upon the floor and wept. Whereupon Pepita mingled her wailing with his, and long and loud were their lamentations.

But even to weeping there comes an end. Josefito finished first, and sat up dejectedly among the fragments. And here he caught sight of St. Joseph, in his niche by the window—St. Joseph, his name saint and Pepita's, the patron of their house, and a never-failing friend in all adversity. To St. Joseph they went with praise in times of joy, and with prayers for help in hours of stress, and seldom had he failed them. No matter what the difficulty, the mother recommended a universal method of solving it: "A prayer and a candle to San José". To St. Joseph all things were possible. A sudden wave of hope swept through the caverns of despair; might not St. Joseph *mend* the wax fruits?

"A prayer and a candle to San José." A prayer! A thousand prayers, a thousand million prayers he would say if only they would avail him. But the candle was another matter. Josefito looked about him

desperately. No sign of a candle anywhere.

"Pepita," he said, "have you a candle about you?"

He had known before she answered that she had none, but somehow he could not help hoping that she might, in some miraculous fashion, produce one. With her negation, however, that hope vanished. Josefito was hard pushed. No candle, no miracle, of that he felt certain, and candles were manifestly impossible of attainment. But, if not a candle, why not the lamp? Surely if the saint so greatly appreciated a small wax candle, and would work wonders accordingly, what infinitely greater possibilities might there not lurk in a beautiful bronze lamp? The lamp it should be. But the shrine was small, too small for the heavy lamp; plainly a transfer must be effected.

The tiny wax saint felt himself lifted by two trembling little hands, and in a moment stood on the centre-table, in unpleasant proximity to the lamp which blazed and smoked ominously. He could feel the moist drops begin to trickle down his face, but, being a saint, he smiled on, uncomplainingly.

Meanwhile, Josefito prostrated himself and prayed in an ecstasy of fervor. "Blessed St. Joseph," he entreated, "mend the wax fruits." And Pepita, genuflecting beside him, took up the petition: "Blessed St. Joseph, mend the wax fruits." Then they both said all their prayers, including grace before and after meat. And again, "Blessed St. Joseph, please mend the wax fruits."

Josefito's head, bumping against the table leg, began to swim and feel queer, and his knees were stiff and achey. But mortification of the flesh is an aid to grace. By this time Josefito was thoroughly virtuous and exalted. When St. Joseph had mended the fruits, he should lay them back in their basket and, replacing the glass dome, would steal with Pepita from the room, and never, never again would he enter there without permission.

He was going to give Pepita his best picture-book—it was a trifle torn, but he knew she would not mind that—and his little monkey, and all his marbles. The rest of his treasures her feminine taste could hardly appreciate, but them he meant to divide among Ramoncito and Rafael, the cook's children. He himself should never want to play with them again. He would amuse Pepita, and study, and hear mass, and when he was quite old, fourteen or thereabouts, he would renounce the world and enter a monastery.

All this he promised St. Joseph, if only the good saint would but grant his supplication. Then, with hope stirring within him, Josefito looked up—looked up, and started and rubbed his eyes, and looked again. Then he gasped, a smothered, frightened little gasp, and fell back limply against Pepita, who, thus aroused, beheld her brother huddled in a terrified heap beside her, pointing a shaking forefinger ominously before him. And after one look Pepita also started and gasped; and then she began to cry weakly. Whereupon Josefito gathered himself together, and putting one arm about her, mopped her face into streaks with his dirty little pocket-handkerchief, and made her comforting promises of a vague and uncertain protection, in incoherent whispers. She smuggled her

hand into his, and he gave her one of his rare kisses; and finally, summoning all their resolution, they arose, and once more faced the scene of disaster.

The wax fruits still lay in fragments about them; the lamp still flared—but no longer before St. Joseph. The little wax saint was GONE! On the table there lay a little pool of something moist and sticky, which glistened in the bright light, and trickled down the side of the cover. Josefito advanced slowly, and inspected. That moment recorded an event in his life history. He threw off the shackles of empiricism and clung to the staff of reason; he had made a scientific discovery.

Wax saints, when exposed to the heat of a lighted lamp, will melt.

His comment was brief, but explicit.

"We'll catch it, now," he said mournfully.

He had eaten of the Fruit of Knowledge, and he was afraid.

There was a sudden stir and a bustle in the corridor, the street door opened and closed, and the mother's voice called from the *patio*:

"Josefito! Pepita! Where are you, my children?"

Hand in hand, they turned toward the door of the *patio*. But because the way of transgressors is hard, the transgressors went but slowly.



NO EXCEPTION

BURGLAR—All I want is your money, lady!

OLD MAID—Go away, wretch—you're just like all the other men I know!



HE is not a marrying man, I believe."

"He will be before she gets through with him."

THE CALL OF THE CITY

GOOD-BYE, deep-bosomed hills, good-bye!
 Here still, in thine assuaging breast,
 Shall brood content and quiet rest;
 Here, for all time, earth's languorous days
 Shall swing their long-houred, sun-clad ways;
 Here death and quiet leaves shall fall,
 And glad birds sing and waters call;
 Here muffled-noted solace still
 Shall brood above each opiate hill,
 And all the wings of time seem furled—
 But still, still calls the outer world!
 Through each soft valley of content
 We crave the old bewilderment
 Of street and dust and mart again;
 The old, mad, million-throated strain,
 The citied press and roar, to slake
 Life's old immedicable ache!
 We live by battle, and must go
 Where sterner tides and currents flow!
 Insatiate we thirst for life;
 Peace, peace is good; but best is strife!
 We are not wholly made, soft hills,
 For rest like thine; life wakes and thrills
 To outland voices, to the need
 Of dubious issue, valorous deed!
 Life, with its tangled hopes and fears,
 Life, with its dripping of dark tears,
 Life, with its laughter, love, regret—
 This is the bond that holds us yet!
 Deep in thy silences our heart
 Forgot each teeming square and mart,
 Where men their good, grim schooling earn,
 And fall and rise and slowly learn,
 While still, in thine unaging breast,
 Shall brood content and quiet rest!
 Good-bye, deep-bosomed hills, good-bye!

ARTHUR STRINGER.



SOMETIMES THE CASE

“**W**AS the moral of the play plainly drawn?”
 “Well, not nearly so much so as the immoral.”

THE EIGHTH DEADLY SIN

By James Huneker

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.—*Genesis*.

THE SERMON

“**A**ND the Seven Deadly Sins, beloved brethren, are: Pride, Covetousness, Lust, Anger, Gluttony, Envy, Sloth. To these our wise Mother the Church opposes the contrary virtues: Humility, Chastity, Meekness, Temperance, Brotherly Love, Diligence.”

The voice of the preacher was clear and well-modulated. It penetrated to the remotest corner of the church. Baldur, sitting near the pulpit, with its elaborate traceries of marble, idly wondered why the sins were with few exceptions words of one syllable, while those of the virtues were all longer. Perhaps because it was easier to sin than to repent. The voice of the speaker deepened as he continued:

“Now the Seven Deadly Arts are: Music, Literature, Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Dancing, Acting. The mercy of God has luckily purified these once pagan inventions and transformed them into saving instruments of grace. Yet it behooves us to examine with the utmost diligence the possible sources of evil latent in each and every one of those arts. Then we shall consider some of the special forms of sin that may develop from them. St. Chrysostom warned the faithful against the danger of the Eighth Deadly Sin—Perfume . . .”

His phrases, which began to fall into the rhythmic drone of a Sunday sermon, lulled Baldur to dreaming. Perfume—that delicious vocable! And

the contrast with what his own nostrils reported to his consciousness made him slightly shiver.

It was on a Friday night in Lent that, weary in flesh and spirit, his conscience out of tune, he had entered the church and taken the first vacant seat. Without, the air was sluggish; after leaving his club the idea of theatres or calls had set his teeth on edge. He longed to be alone, to weigh in the silence of his heart the utter futility of life. Religion had never been a part of his training as the only son of a millionaire, and if he preferred the Roman Catholic ritual to all others it was because the appeal was to his esthetic sense—a Turkish mosque, he assured his friends, produced the same soothing impression—gauze veils gently waving and slowly obscuring the dulling realities of everyday existence. This *morbidezza* of the spirit the Mahometans call *Kef*—the Christians, pious ecstasy.

But now he could not plunge himself, despite the faint odor of incense lingering in the atmosphere, into the deepest pit of his personality. At first he ascribed his restlessness to the sultry weather, then to his abuse of tea and cigarettes—perhaps it was the sharp odor of the average congregation, that collective odor of humanity encountered in church, theatre or court-rooms. The smell of poverty was mingled with the heavy scents of fashionable women, who, in the minority, made their presence felt by their showy gowns, rustling movements and attitudes of superior boredom. In a vast building like this extremes touch with eagerness on the part of the poor,

to whom these furtive views of the rich and indolent brought with them a bitter consolation.

Baldur remarked many of these things as he leaned back in his hard seat and barely listened to the sermon, which poured forth as if the tap would never be turned off again. And then a delicate note of iris, most episcopal of perfumes, emerged from the mass of odors—musk, garlic, damp shoes, alcohol, shabby clothing, rubber, pomade, cologne, rice powder, tobacco, patchouli, sachet, and a hundred other tintings of the earthly symphony. The finely specialized olfactory sense of the young man told him that it was either a bishop or a beautiful woman who imparted to the air the subtle, penetrating aroma of iris.

But it was neither ecclesiastic nor maid. At his side sat a short, rather thick-set woman of vague age; she might have been twenty-five or forty. Her hair was cut in masculine fashion, her attire unattractive. As clearly as he could distinguish her features he saw that she was not good-looking. A stern mask it was, though not hardened. He would not have looked at such an ordinary physiognomy twice if the iris had not signaled his peculiar sense. There was no doubt that to her it was due.

Susceptible as he was to odors Baldur was not a ladies' man. He went into society because it was his world; and he attended in a perfunctory manner to the enormous estate left him by his father, bound up in a single trust company. But his thoughts were always three thousand miles away, in that delectable city of cities, Paris. For Paris he suffered a painful nostalgia. There he met his true brethren, while in New York he felt an alien. He was one. The city with its high narrow streets, granite tunnels; its rude reverberations, its colorless, toiling barbarians, with their undistinguished physiognomies, their absolute indifference to art—he did not deny that he loathed this nation vibrating only in the presence of money, politics, sports, while exhibiting

a depressing snobbery to things British. There was no *nuance* in its life or its literature, he asserted. France was his *patrie psychique*; he would return there some day and forever. . . .

The iris crept under his nostrils and again he regarded the woman. This time she faced him and he no longer wondered, for he saw her eyes. With such eyes only a great soul could be imprisoned in her brain. They were smoke-gray with long dark lashes, and they did not seem to focus perfectly—at least there was enough deflection to make their expression odd, withal interesting, like the slow droop of Eleanora Duse's magic eye. Though her features were rigid the woman's glance spoke to Baldur, spoke eloquently. Her eyes were—or was it the iris?—symbols of a soul-state, of a rare emotion, not of sex, nor yet sexless. The pupils seemed powdered with a strange iridescence. He became more troubled than before. What did the curious creature want of him! She was neither coquette nor *cocotte*, flirtation was not hinted in her intense expression. He resumed his former position, but her eyes made his shoulders burn, as if they had sufficient power to bore through them. He no longer paid any attention to his surroundings. The sermon was like the sound of far-away falling waters, the worshipers were so many black marks. Of two things was he aware—the odor of iris and her eyes.

He knew that he was in an overwrought mood. For some weeks it had been descending upon his spirit like a pall. He had avoided music, pictures, the opera—which he never regarded as an art; even his favorite poets he could not read. Nor did he degustate, as was his daily wont, the supreme prose of the French masters. The pleasures of robust stomachs, gormandizing and drinking, were denied him by nature. He could not sip a glass of wine, and for meat he entertained distaste. His physique proved him to be of the neurotic temperament—he was very tall, very slim, of an exceeding elegance, in dress a finical

dandy; while his trim, pointed, black beard and dark, foreign eyes were the cause of his being often mistaken for a Frenchman or a Spaniard—which illusion was not dissipated when he chose to speak in their several tongues.

Involuntarily, and to the ire of his neighbors, he arose and indolently made his way down the side aisle. When he reached the baize swinging-doors he saw the woman approaching him. As if she had been an acquaintance of years she saluted him carelessly, and accompanied by the scandalized looks of many in the congregation the pair left the church, though not before the preacher had sonorously quoted from the psalm, *Domine ne in furore*: “For my loins are filled with illusions; and there is no health in my flesh.”

II

THE SÉANCE

Je cherche des parfums nouveaux, des fleurs plus larges, des plaisirs inéprouvés.—*Flaubert.*

“It may be all a magnificent illusion, but—” he began.

“Everything is an illusion in this life, though seldom magnificent,” she answered.

They slowly walked up the Avenue. The night was tepid; motor-cars looking like magnified beetles with bulging eyes of fire went swiftly by. The pavements were almost deserted when they reached the Park. He felt as if hypnotized, and once, rather meanly, was glad that no one saw him in the company of his dowdy companion.

“I wonder if you realize that we do not know each other’s name?” he said.

“Oh, yes. You are Mr. Baldur. My name is Mrs. Lilith Pfeiffer.”

“Mrs. Pfeiffer? Not the medium?”

“The medium—as you call it. In reality I am only a woman, happy or unhappy, in the possession of supernatural powers.”

“Not supernatural, then?” he inter-

posed. He was a skeptic who called himself agnostic. The mystery of earth and heaven might be interpreted, but always in terms of science; yet he did not fancy the superior manner in which this charlatan flouted the supernatural. He had heard of her miracles—and doubted them. She gave a little laugh at his correction.

“What phrase-jugglers you men are! You want all the splendors of the Infinite thrown in with the price of admission! I said supernormal, because we know of nothing greater than nature. Things that are off the beaten track of the normal, across the frontiers, some call supernatural; but it is their ignorance of the vast, unexplored territory of the spirit—which is only the material masquerading in a different guise.”

“But you go to church, to a Lenten service—?”

It was as if he had known her for many years, and their unconventional behavior never crossed his mind. He did not even ask himself where they were moving.

“I go to church to rest my nerves—as do many other people,” she replied. “I was interested in the parallel of the Seven Deadly Sins and the Seven Deadly Arts.”

“You believe the arts are sinful?” He was curious.

“I don’t believe in sin at all. A bad conscience is the result of poor digestion. Sins are created so that we pay the poll-tax to eternity—pay on this side of the ferry. Yet the arts may become dangerous engines of destruction if wrongfully employed. The Fathers of the early Church, Ambrose and the rest, were right in viewing them suspiciously.”

“The arts diabolic! Then what of the particular form of wizardry practiced so successfully by the celebrated Mrs. Pfeiffer, one of whose names is, according to the Talmud, that of Adam’s first wife?”

“What do you know, my dear young man, of diabolic arts?”

“Only that I am walking with you near the Park on a dark night of April

and I never saw you before a half-hour ago. Isn't that magic—white, not black?"

"Pray do not mock magic, either white or black. Remember the fate of the serpents manufactured by Pharaoh's magicians. They were, need I tell you, speedily devoured by the serpents of Moses and Aaron. Both parties did not play fair in the game. If it was black magic to transform a rod into a snake on the part of Pharaoh's conjurers, was it any less reprehensible for the Hebrew magicians to play the same trick? It was prestidigitation for all concerned—only the side of the children of Israel was espoused in the recital. Therefore do not talk of black or white magic. There is only one true magic. And it is not slate-writing, toe-joint snapping, fortune-telling or the vending of charms. Magic, too, is an art—like other arts. This is forgotten by the majority of its practitioners. Hence the sordid vulgarity of the average mind-reader and humbugging spiritualist of the dark-chamber séance. Besides, the study of the supernormal mind tells us of the mind in health—Nature is shy in revealing her secrets."

They passed the lake and were turning toward the East Driveway. Suddenly she stopped, and, under the faint starlight, she regarded her companion earnestly. He had not been without adventures in his career—Paris always provided them in plenty—but this episode with a homely woman piqued him. Her eye he felt was upon him and her voice soothing.

"Mr. Baldur—listen! Since Milton wrote his great poem the English-speaking people are all devil-worshippers, for Satan is the hero of 'Paradise Lost.' But I am no table-tipping medium eager for your applause or your money. I don't care for money. I think you know enough of me through the newspapers to vouchsafe this. You are rich, and it is your chief misery. Listen! Whether you believe it or not, you are very unhappy. Let me read your horoscope. Your club life bores you; you are tired

of our silly theatres; no longer do you care for Wagner's music. You are deracinated—you are unpatriotic. For that there is no excuse. The arts are for you deadly. I am sure you are a lover of literature. Yet what a curse it has been for you! When you see one of your friends drinking wine you call him a fool because he is poisoning himself. But you—you—poison your spirit with the honey of France or Scandinavia or Russia. As for the society of women—"

"The Eternal Womanly!" he sneered.

"The Eternal Simpleton, you mean. In that swamp of pettiness, idiocy and materialism a man of your nature could not long abide. Religion—it has not yet responded to your need, and without faith your sins lose their savor. The arts—you don't know them all, the Seven Deadly Arts and the One Beautiful Art!"

She paused. Her voice had been like the sound of delicate flutes. He was aflame.

"Is there, then, an eighth art?" he quickly asked.

"Would you know it if you saw it?"

"Of course. Where is it, what is it?"

She laughed and took his arm.

"Why did you look at me in church?"

"Because—it was mere chance—no, it may have been the odor of iris. I am mad over perfume. I think it a neglected art. Degraded to the function of anointment, I have often dreamed of an art by which a dazzling and novel synthesis of fragrant perfumes would be invented by some genius, some latter-day Rimmel or Lubin, whom we could hail as a peer of Chopin or Richard Strauss—two composers who have expressed perfume in tone. Yes—it was the iris that attracted me."

"But I had no iris about me. I have none now," she simply replied.

He faced her. "No iris? What—?"

"I thought iris," she added triumphantly as she guided him into one of the side streets of Madison avenue.

He was astounded. She must be a hypnotist, he said to himself. No smell of iris clung to her now. And he

remembered that the odor disappeared after they had left the church.

He held his peace until they arrived before a brownstone house of the ordinary kind with an English basement. She took a key from her pocket and, going down several steps, beckoned to him. Baldur followed. His interest in this modern Cassandra and her bizarre words was too great for him to hesitate or to realize that he would get himself into some dangerous scrape. And was this truly the Mrs. Pfeiffer whose tricks of telepathy and other extraordinary antics had puzzled and angered the wise men of two continents? He did not have much time for reflection. A grilled door opened and presently he was in a room furnished very much like a physician's office. Electric bulbs, an open grate and two bookcases gave the apartment a familiar, cheerful appearance. Baldur sat down on a low chair, and Mrs. Pfeiffer removed her commonplace headgear. In the bright light she was younger than he had imagined, and her head was a beautifully modeled one—broad brows, very full at the back, and the mask that of an emotional actress. Her smoke-colored eyes were most remarkable, and her helmet of hair as black as sin.

"And now that you are my guest at last, Mr. Baldur, let me apologize for the exercise of my art upon your responsive nerves."

She made this witch-burning admission as if she were accounting for the absence of tea. To his relief she offered him nothing. He had a cigarette between his fingers, but he did not care to smoke. She continued:

"For some time I have known you—never mind how! For some time I have wished to meet you. I am not an impostor, nor do I desire to pose as the goddess of a new creed. But you, Irving Baldur, are a man among men who will appreciate what I may show you. You love, you understand perfumes. You have even wished for a new art—don't forget that there are others in the world to whom the seven arts have become a thrice-told tale, to

whom the arts have become too useful. All great art should be useless. Yet architecture houses us; sculpture flatters us; painting imitates us; dancing is pure vanity; literature and the drama mere vehicles for bread-earning; while music—music, the most useless art, as it should have been—is in the hands of the speculators. Moreover, music is too sexual—it reports in a more intense style the stories of our loves. Music is the memory of love. What prophet will enter the temple of the modern arts and drive away with his divine scourge the vile money-changers who fatten therein?"

Her voice was shrill as she paced the room. A very sibyl this, her crest of hair agitated, her eyes sparkling with wrath. He missed the Cumæan tripod.

"There is an art, Baldur, an art that was one of the lost arts of Babylon until now, one based, as are all the arts, on the senses. Perfume—the poor, neglected nose has now its revenge. It has outlived the other senses in the esthetic field."

"What of the palate?—you have forgotten that. Cookery, too, is a fine art," he ventured. His smile irritated her.

"Yes, Frenchmen have invented symphonic sauces, they say. But again, eating is a useful art; primarily it serves to nourish the body. When man was wholly wild—he is a mere barbarian today—his sense of smell guarded him from his foes, from the beasts, from a thousand dangers. Civilization with its charming odors of decay—have you ever ventured to savor New York?—cast into abeyance the keenest of all senses. Little wonder, then, that there was no art of perfume like the arts of vision and sound. I firmly believe the Hindus, Egyptians and the Chinese knew of such an art. How account for the power of theocracies! How else credit the tales of the saints who scattered perfumes—St. Francis de Paul, St. Joseph of Cupertino, Venturini of Bergamo?"

"But," he interrupted, "all this is interesting, fascinating. What I wish

to know is what form your art can take. How marshal odors as melodies in a symphony, as colors on a canvas?"

She made an impatient gesture.

"And how like an amateur you talk. Melody! When harmony is infinitely greater in music! Form! When color is infinitely greater than line. The most profound music gives only the timbre—melodies are for infantile people without imagination—who believe in patterns. Tone is the quality I wish on a canvas, not anxious drawing. So is it with perfumes. I can blend them into groups of lovely harmony; I can give you single notes of delicious timbre—in a word, I can evoke an odor symphony which will transport you. Memory is a supreme factor in this art. Do not forget how the vaguest scent will carry you back to your youthful dreamland. It is also the secret of spiritual correspondences—it plays the great role of bridging space between human beings."

"I sniff the air promise-crammed," he gaily misquoted. "But when will you rewrite this Apocalypse? And how am I to know whether I shall really enjoy this feast of perfume, if you can simulate the odor of iris as you did an hour ago?"

"I propose to show you an artificial paradise," she firmly asserted.

In the middle of the room there was a round table, the top inlaid with agate. On it a large blue bowl stood and it was empty. Mrs. Pfeiffer went to a swinging cabinet and took from it a dozen small phials.

"Now for the incantation," he jokingly said.

In her matter-of-fact manner she placed the bottles on the table and uncorking them she poured them slowly into the bowl. He broke the silence:

"Isn't there any special form of hair-raising invocation that goes with this dangerous operation?"

"Listen to this verse from James Thomson." And, her eyes swimming with fire, she intoned:

"As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: Lo you
there,
That hillock burning with a brazen glare;

Those myriad dusky flames with points
aglow
Which writhed and hissed and darted to
and fro;
A Sabbath of the serpents, heaped pell-mell
For Devil's roll-call and some *felte* in Hell:
Yet I strode on austere—
No hope could have no fear.

"That is from a poem called 'The City of Dreadful Night,'" she whispered.

He did not seem to hear. From out the bowl there was stealing a perfume which overmastered his will and led him captive to the lugubrious glade of the Druids. . . .

III

THE SABBATH

Comme d'autres esprits voguent sur la
musique.
Le mien, ô mon amour! nage sur ton par-
fum.

—Baudelaire.

He was not dreaming, for he saw the woman at the bowl, saw her apartment. But the interior of his brain was as melancholy as a lighted cathedral. A mortal sadness encompassed him, and his nerves were like taut violin strings. It was within the walls of his skull that he saw—his mundane surroundings did not disturb his visions.

And the waves of dolor swept over his consciousness. A mingling of tuber-roses, narcissus, attar-of-roses and ambergris he detected in the air—as *triste* as a morbid nocturne of Chopin. This was followed by a blending of heliotrope, moss rose and hyacinth, together with dainty touches of geranium. He dreamed of Beethoven's manly music when whiffs of apple blossom, white rose, cedar and cologne reached him. Mozart passed roguishly by in strains of scarlet pimpernel, mignonette, syringa and violets. Then the sky was darkened with Schumann's perverse harmonies as jasmine, lavender and lime were sprayed over him. Music, then, was the art nearest akin to odor. A superb and subtle chord floated about him; it was composed of vervain, opopanax and frangipane. He

could not conceive of a more unearthly triad. It was music from *Parsifal*. Through the mists that were gathering he savored a fulminating bouquet of patchouli, musk, bergamot, and he recalled the music of Mascagni. Brahms strode stolidly on in company with new-mown hay, balsam and sweet peas. Liszt was interpreted as ylang-ylang, myrrh and maréchale; Richard Strauss by wistaria, oil of cloves, chypre, poppy and crab-apple.

Suddenly there was developed a terrific orchestration of chromatic odors—ambrosia, cassis, orange, peach blossoms and musk of Tonkin, magnolia, eglantine, hortensia, lilac, saffron, begonia, *peau d'espagne*, acacia, carnation, oliban, *fleur de takeoka*, cypress, oil of almonds, jacinth, rue, shrub, olea, bezoin clematis, the hediosma of Jamaica, olive, vanilla, petunia, lotus, frankincense, sorrel, neroli from Japan, jonquil, verbena and decaying orchids.

This quintessential medley was as the sonorous blasts of Berlioz, repugnant and exquisite; it swayed the soul of Baldur as the wind sways the flame. There were odors like winged dreams; odors as impure as toads; odors as the plucked sounds of celestial harps; odors mystic and evil; odors corrupt and opulent; odors like voluptuous nightmares; odors recalling the sweet, dense smell of chloroform; odors evil, angelic and anonymous. They painted upon his cerebellum more than music—music that merged into picture; and he was again in the glade of the Druids. The huge scent-symphony dissolved in a shower of black roses, which covered the ground ankle-deep. An antique temple of exotic architecture had thrown open its bronze doors and out there surged and rustled a throng of Bacchanalian beings who sported and shouted around a vile terminal god, which with smiling ironic lips accepted their delirious homage. White nymphs and brown displayed in choric rhythms the dance of the Seven Deadly Sins, and their goat-hoofed mates gave vertiginous pursuit.

At first the pagan gaiety of the scene fired the fancy of the solitary spectator; but soon, his nerves disordered by

the rout and fatigued by the spoor of so many odors, warned him that something disquieting was at hand. He felt a nameless horror as the sweet, sinister, bitter odor of honeysuckle, sandalwood and aloes echoed from the sacred grove. A score of seductive young witches pranced in upon their broomsticks and, without dismounting, surrounded the garden god. The vespertine hour was nigh, and over this iron landscape there floated the moon, an opal button in the sky. Then, to his shame and fear, he saw that the Satyr had vanished and in its place reared a Black Venus, the dread shape of ancient Africa, and her face was the face of Lilith. The screaming lovely witches capered in fantastic spirals, each sporting a lighted candle. It was the diabolic circus of the Candles, the infernal circus of the Witches' Sabbath. Rooted to the ground, Baldur realized with fresh amazement and vivid pain the fair beauty of Adam's prehistoric wife, her luxurious blond hair, her shapely shoulders, her stature of a goddess—he trembled, for she had turned her mordant gaze in his direction. And he strove in vain to bring back the comforting vision of the chamber. She smiled and the odors of sandal, honeysuckle and aloes encircled his soul like the plaited strands of her glorious hair. She was that other Lilith, the only offspring of the old Serpent. On what storied fresco limned by what worshiper of Satan had these accursed lineaments, this lithe, seductive figure been shown! Names of Satanic painters from Hell-Fire Breughel to Arnold Böcklin, from Felicien Rops to Franz Stuck passed through the halls of this nosophile's memory.

The clangor of the feast was become maddening. He heard the Venus ballet-music from *Tannhäuser* entwined with the acridities of aloes, sandal and honeysuckle. Then the aroma of pitch, sulphur and asafoetida cruelly strangled the other melodic emanations. Lilith, disdaining the shelter of her nymphs and their clowneries, stood forth in all the hideous majesty of *Ænothea*, the un-

dulating priestess of the abominable Shape. His nerves macerated by this sinful apparition, Baldur struggled to resist her mute command. What was it? He saw her wish streaming from her eyes. Despair! Despair! Despair! There is no hope for thee, wretched earthworm! No abode but the abysmal House of Satan! Despair, and you will be welcomed! By a violent act of volition, set in motion by his fingers fumbling a small gold cross he wore as a watch-guard, the heady fumes of the orgy dissipated.

He was sitting facing the bowl and over it with her calm, confidential gaze was the figure of Lilith Pfeiffer.

"Have I proved to you that perfume is the art of arts?" she demanded.

He rushed from the room and was shaking the grilled gate in the hallway like a caged maniac, when with a pitying smile she released him. He reached the street at a bound. . . .

" . . . the evil of perfume, I repeat was one against which the

venerable Fathers of the Church warned the faithful."

The preacher's voice had sagged to a monotone. Baldur lifted his eyes in dismay. Near him sat the same woman, and she still stared at him as if to rebuke him for his abstraction. About her hovered the odor of iris. Had it been only a disturbing dream! Intoxicated by his escape from damnation, from the last of the Deadly Arts, he bowed his head in grateful prayer. What ecstasy to be once more in the arms of Mother Church! There, dipped in her lustral waters, and there alone would he find solace for his barren heart, pardon for his insane pride of intellect, and protection from the demons that waylaid his dolent soul! The sermon ended as it began:

"And the Seven Deadly Sins, beloved brethren, are: Pride, Covetousness, Lust, Anger, Gluttony, Envy and Sloth. *Oremus!*"

"Amen," fervently responded Baldur the Immoralist.



PERFECTION

WHAT is there in the light of afternoon—
The low, long waver through midsummer leaves
On ripened grass—that all my spirit grieves,
Beholding? Here the happy dreams of June
Are all come true; the little harvest moon
Lays her white sickle to the full gold sheaves
Of sunbeams; in the ardor-darkened leaves
A bird in utter joy forgets his tune.

But oh! the sorrow—oh! the strange regret
Here in my heart, because the summer's prime
Blooms now. The highest rapture of the year
Trembles at zenith. . . . Ah, belovèd, let
Me never know thine all of love, to fear
What cometh after love's midsummertime.

RUBY ARCHER.

THE MAN, THE MAID AND THE MACHINE

By Cecil Carlisle Pangman

IT was manifestly of little use to waste breath vilifying Applegath, so, after the first intemperate outbreak, I lit my pipe and settled back comfortably in the deep seat of the tonneau. He, poor fellow, without coat or waistcoat, his shirt sleeves rolled above his elbows, appeared from time to time crawling from beneath the car on one side or the other, mucked with oil and dust from head to heel, and with unfettered speech, saying precisely whatsoever occurred to him out of the fulness of his heart. His periodic disappearances under me were followed by hammerings and clinkings and vague, unsettled rumblings from the interior of the machine, punctuated by violent oaths and exclamations of pain.

Though slightly nervous at the thought of being thus perched upon an incipient volcano, engendered by random recollections of tales of exploding gasoline, or whatever it was these machines carried, I smoked on quietly and gradually regained my usual equipoise of mind and temper. I have found that nothing conduces so much to an unclouded sense of one's own well-being as the sight of some fellow-mortal very hot and dirty and busy, while one rests at ease with an untrammelled soul.

In truth, though, I had every reason to be the aggrieved party, and any excess of language could not but be forgiven me. Had not Applegath tempted me from the club immediately after luncheon with enthusiastic descriptions of the unrivaled charms of motoring? Had he not drawn rosy and purely imaginative pictures of the flight

through the country on such a bright afternoon, until my cautious blood had been stirred by the recital? Pictures of white, smooth ribbons of road that rolled up behind you to the tune of the purring motor; of shady byways streaked and dappled with bands of sunlight breaking through the screen of overarching trees, where the scent of clover and sweet hay hung heavy on the air—gateways to Lotos-land and fair countries of adventure; of far vistas of lake and waterway flashing into view from hilltops.

Applegath talked well, for motoring was his hobby, and, having thus allowed him to get fairly mounted, I should have fled swiftly, only I had but just commenced my luncheon. Even on my insisting he should lunch with me, in the hope that when eating he would, perforce, be obliged to shut up, there seemed no perceptible lessening of the flow of his eloquence, and in sheer panic I surrendered.

It was peace without honor, for I had rather gone on record as disapproving of the motoring fever which had lately overrun the club. My last feeble struggle availed me nothing, for on my saying I was going to Bellefont, Jack Macklem's place, on an early train to spend Sunday, Applegath clinched all further argument by informing me that he, too, was bound there, and we could go together in his car. I got what little consolation I could from the thought that, after all, two or three hours' quiet spin through the country on such a jewel of a day would certainly be much better for my health than loafing about the club until train-time.

So this will explain how I came to

find myself settled very comfortably in the tonneau, watching the smoke from my pipe curl blue and faint into the hot, windless, afternoon air, while Applegath sweated and swore and toiled, bedewing himself plentifully with oil, and doing what I feared would prove permanent damage to his usually even temper.

When he emerged from time to time I thought it more considerate not to notice his condition nor to ask questions, so I would gaze away down the road in blissful unconcern, or fix my eyes on some steadily floating speck of cloud sailing across the perfect blue of the summer sky, conscious all the while how he hated me at the moment and how his fingers itched to heave at my head the murderous monkey-wrench he carried.

We had left the main road some miles back, and the byway on which we had suffered shipwreck ran between yellowing stretches of grain—truly Fields of the Cloth of Gold—intersected by the dark wavering lines of the snake-fences. On one hand they billowed out of sight over a gentle rise in the ground and sloped away on the other to a little ridge of pine trees, whose dark green showed almost black against the vivid gold. Here and there ran a blaze of mustard or buckwheat flower, and over all arched the intense, glowing firmament, cloudless almost, and radiant with heat. There were no quiet tones of color, save the dark, restful band of pine trees; everything quivered and flamed in the fervent light outpoured upon them. About us crickets and grasshoppers were chirping and clattering madly, and all sign of humanity or its habitations was absent from the landscape.

I smoked on. I found the sun most disagreeably hot; my nose, I knew, would peel badly on the morrow and make me an unsightly object; moreover, I was deuced thirsty, and this seemed a land of sand and thorns where no place of assuagement was to be found. Altogether, there was every possibility of my relapsing into my former critical and uncharitable frame

of mind through sheer bodily discomfort—deserting high Olympus and its calm to mingle with Applegath in the dust of profanity and mutual abuse. His sudden reappearance saved me and the contemplation of the spectacle he presented restored my waning sense of well-being.

“Damn!” said Applegath.

Then he swung his arm and hurled something far out into the field. It was the monkey-wrench. It described a graceful parabola and disappeared without a sound into the sea of grain. It was as surely and as irrevocably lost as though it had sunk into a thousand fathoms of midocean.

“That’s foolish,” I remarked. “You may want it again.”

“Oh, damn it! No, I won’t. It’s done for us,” Applegath spluttered.

He held out on his palm a few fragments of metal at which I peered uninterestedly. He drew his other arm across his face, and the oil and perspiration marked his countenance with a broad bar from chin to ear. His leather cap pushed on the back of his head, with the absurd goggles about the band, together with the general disorder of his apparel, gave him such a really awful appearance that I’m afraid I may have smiled. Well, he couldn’t get any hotter or redder—that is, where you could see his skin between the patches of dust and grease—and I shouldn’t have thought he had any reserve of language, either—but he had.

I let him run on. I, of course, was his guest. He had beguiled me out to ride with him and had stopped for no earthly reason on a lonely, deserted stretch of road. Owing to him, I had been slowly cooking in the sun for an hour, was assailed with all the horrors of a consuming thirst, and would, probably, be late for dinner at my destination into the bargain. Decidedly I was the aggrieved one and I could afford not to mind him overmuch. After a purple minute or two, in which the heavens above and the earth beneath and the waters under the earth had been wracked for meta-

phors to explain just what sort of car this was and what manner of man I happened to be, his breath failed him completely. I said:

"Now get yourself decent and climb in and start the bally thing going again. We've wasted a good hour here and it's time we moved along."

He gazed up at me blankly. His lips moved, but speech deserted him.

"I've sat here," I went on pleasantly, "and got my face burned to a cinder. I'm dying of thirst, and I hate being late for dinner. You'll have to get this machine to hump it all she knows."

He waved his fist in my face; he danced unholy dances upon the dust; he besmeared his countenance with new and fearful patterns.

"We can't! We can't! You—you idiot, don't you understand? We can't!" he shrieked at last, with much more that was hardly seemly.

"What are you talking about?" I broke in, perhaps a trifle impatiently, although no suspicion of our helpless condition had reached me yet. "Of course we can't until you get on board and set the foolish thing going."

"But it won't go, I'm telling you!" he cried. "Here I'm showing you what's broken. It won't go at all now—and I don't believe that was the matter to begin with. You won't understand, of course, but this little piece of machinery is broken, and it won't move an inch without it."

I regarded the fragments of splintered steel in his hands more closely and began to realize the magnitude of our misfortune.

"Do you mean to say we're stuck here?" I demanded.

"That's just what it is. I haven't another piece in the tool-box. I could fit it on in a minute if I had. But that is the blasted luck."

"Now, look here," I said sternly, thoroughly aroused. "This is nonsense—sheer idiocy. I'm not going to be stuck here, let me tell you. I'm due at Macklem's for dinner, and I'm going to get there, too."

"Well, you can't—see! That's all

there is to it. It's a good fifteen miles from here, and you can't walk and carry a suit-case, can you? Don't you be a fool."

"Don't be a fool yourself," I retorted hotly. "What's the matter with a train? There must be a railway somewhere up this country. Or I'll get a cart from the nearest farm. I'm not going to spend the rest of my life on this piece of road, let me tell you."

"We haven't passed a farmhouse for miles," replied Applegath, "and the railroad is 'way back of us. Now, see here. The only way out of this is for me to walk back to the nearest station and wire my garage for the piece I want. They'll send it out by the first train with a mechanic, and I'll get a rig and drive right back with him. It won't take very long, and it's all there is to do, anyway."

"Well, I'll go back too," I asserted indignantly, "and take the train myself. I'm through with motor-cars and all kindred abominations and uncleanness. I'll never put foot in another as long as I live."

"Yes. And carry your grip a matter of a couple of miles," Applegath sneered. "You can't go to Macklem's as you are, you know. And if you go back to town you won't be able to get out again tonight, so you'll miss everything. Besides, someone has got to watch the car. It's too valuable to leave on a piece of road like this."

"Huh!" I snorted. "Who'd touch it, anyway? Who'd want a car that won't go unless they happened to have a dozen horses with nothing else to do but haul it round? They might take it home and put it on the front lawn and plant flowers in it; or an enterprising farmer might use it in his fields to scare crows. No one else is going to run off with your old car. They'll have to turn the road round it; it would be cheaper than trying to move it."

It may be noticed that my temper was getting slightly the better of me and I was saying things which might have hurt Applegath. He grew cool suddenly.

"Don't be a chump, old man," he

said anxiously. "I blame myself for leading you into this, and I'll do all the work about getting you out. All you'll have to do will be to sit still and contemplate the landscape and all these lavish outpourings of Nature's bounty. Consider the lilies and go to the ant, and see if you cannot learn some lesson and make a better man of yourself by the time I get back. There are tremendous possibilities in it, and you won't have a chance to get tired."

His soft answer somewhat diminished my wrath, though not sufficiently to allow me to make any suggestion of going in his stead. I watched him sulkily as he tried with a handful of cotton waste to reduce his appearance to some outward semblance of respectability, and gave no response to his cheery farewell as he faced about the way we had come, and set out on his long walk.

I really couldn't remain long in the sulks. Though I was distressfully warm and the flies began to bother, and my throat had completely closed up with thirst, the peacefulness of this deserted countryside, sun-steeped, color-drenched, honey-scented, made its way through every pore of my soul. I climbed out of the car and found the only available square foot of shade on a grassy bank beside the roadway, filled my pipe again and lay back listening to the ascending hum of the unseen chirpers in the grain and the faintest whisper of the vagrant breezes delicately stirring the tasseled heads. But I found my thirst made smoking impossible, and I got up, resolved to explore along the road a bit to see if I could find a farmhouse or even a wayside well or stream. I strolled slowly along to where, a short distance ahead, the road took a sharp turn, and upon rounding this, I came suddenly to a dead stop and rubbed my eyes with amazement.

A deserted automobile was on one side of the roadway. The sun winked and flickered on the bright brasswork of the lamps, on the polished lacquer of the red body. A litter of tools and

fittings lying in the dust beside it spoke an eloquent tale of wreck and disaster. Here was another derelict upon the ocean of the highway, desolate and forgotten. I could hardly help laughing outright as I approached. The thought of a fellow-sufferer was wondrous soothing. To my inexperienced eye the machine was an exact duplicate of the one I had left, and I almost expected Applegath to emerge from behind or from under it and commence rubbing his face, discoursing fluently the while. I began to wonder how it came to be abandoned in this fashion.

Walking carelessly as I approached, I kicked over a box, and there was a wild scattering of tools and odds and ends of repair fittings. In common decency I couldn't leave them scattered, and I began to pick them up and throw them back noisily into the box. When I had finished and straightened up, half choked with dust, I became aware of a girl watching me from over the high back of the tonneau with amused eyes under a much tilted automobile cap. There were floating wisps of veiling about her face, which made it seem as though she had dropped from the sky "trailing clouds of glory," instead of merely bobbing up from the seat.

I bowed stiffly. I must have made a pleasing picture grubbing in the dust after bits of oily metal, and my hands were in consequence very filthy. That was why she looked so amused, probably.

"Have you picked them all up?" she asked.

"I believe so," I answered, looking all about me on the road. "I didn't know anyone was near. I couldn't see anybody."

"I was asleep down on the seat," she said. "You wakened me with the noise you made throwing those things about. Be sure you've got them all, please. They may come in useful, you know, some time or other. Though, to be sure, you never seem to have the particular piece you want at the particular time."

"No. You never do, as I know to my cost," I assented ruefully. "That's why I'm strolling about the road. But I'm really very sorry I awakened you."

"Why, did you come in an automobile?" she asked, smiling forgivingly.

"Indeed I did."

"Where is it? Near here?"

"Only a hundred yards or so around the corner," I replied, waving my hand in that direction. "I should be on my guard looking after it, but I'm so disgusted with its abominable behavior I'm ashamed to be seen with it. Besides, I wandered off to look for a drink of something, somewhere. After an hour or two in the sun, 'my clay with long oblivion hath gone dry,' you know, and I'm really dying of thirst."

"But fill me with the old familiar juice, perchance I may recover by and bye."

She capped my quotation neatly, disappearing behind the high back of the seat, and presently sitting up again holding out a flask and a bottle of mineral water.

"Here you are. Do help yourself. Billy is an old hand at this game of camping by the road. Long and cruel experience has taught him never to travel without his commissariat. I'm afraid the water is a trifle warm, though."

It was; but never had I tasted, in a long and fairly intimate acquaintance with many and varied beverages, such a delicious, soul-satisfying drink. I felt rejuvenated and the world grew young again with me.

"But isn't this weird?" I remarked, after a pause. "Both shipwrecked because some little piece of metal is missing from the repair-box. I'm sure the car I've left is exactly the same as this one, and probably each of us has the precise fragment of which the other stands so urgently in need. My friend, who beguiled me out, is tramping his way back to get assistance."

"Yes, it is funny," she asserted, "breaking down so close to each other and never knowing. Something seemed

to go wrong inside and Billy worked underneath for hours and failed to locate the trouble. And then, after all, it turned out to be only gasoline he had run short of. He discovered it about the very last thing. He had to go off to get help, and he's left me in charge. It's one of my first experiences at the game, and none of them have been very promising. Do you know anything about automobiles?"

"Nothing at all," I replied piously, "and my recent introduction does not inspire me with any very urgent desire for greater intimacy. My friend turned himself from a respectable member of society into a boiler-maker and chimney-sweep in five minutes and shocked me horribly with his language. I prefer to remain only upon bowing terms with the monster. It's not so bad, I'll allow, when you're perched comfortably on his back and he proves fairly tractable; but to lie on one's own back in the dust underneath and pry into his workings while oil and grease drip into your eyes is another and less pleasing feature."

"Exactly like Billy!" she cried merrily. "He was a sight, poor man, and I'm afraid I hindered him dreadfully, because he couldn't say the things he wanted to say—the things the machine probably understands quite well by now, and they seem to help a man an awful lot when he's struggling with machinery and tools and things."

"Been here long?" I queried, after a short pause, in which I finished the remainder of the apollinaris.

"Oh, ages and ages—a thousand years at least! Who is President now, or are we still United States, or what?"

"I've been more than a thousand years on the road myself," I replied, "so I've no news of any kind."

"Where are we, anyway? Do you know where Bellefont is—Mr. Jack Macklem's place, and how far we are from it?"

"Bellefont?" I queried. "Jack Macklem's?"

"Yes."

"Why, are you going there too?"

"Too? Why, are you?"

"I came out with that intention, but goodness knows if I ever will. And Jack will never forgive me for being late for dinner, and I won't forgive myself for missing it, either."

"Yes, I'm afraid we're going to be very late, if we get there at all tonight."

"Don't put it that way. We're bound to get there some time or other," I said forlornly, seating myself on the fence. "I suppose we must wait here until we are rescued. I don't believe anyone ever travels along this road, and there doesn't seem to be a sign of a house anywhere. Queer where these farmer-people tuck themselves away, isn't it?"

"It is, rather. Billy knows the country around here pretty well, and I fancy he'll find the nearest place where he can get a cart of sorts and come back for us. In the meantime we must possess our souls in patience."

"He'll never come back," I remarked dismally. "I know he won't. This is an enchanted piece of road, and, having left it, he will never be able to find it again. We will wait here faithfully at our posts until we starve to death, and ages afterward, when the charm is broken, some adventurous stranger will happen across this spot and discover a decayed automobile of ancient pattern and the remains of us two hapless pilgrims moldering to dust."

"Well, you are cheerful about it, anyway," she answered. "It's very nice to have someone around who always looks on the bright side of things and refuses to be discouraged. I feel much more hopeful now."

And as a sign thereof she settled back contentedly into her seat, her eyes drooping languidly, as though she planned to resume the slumbers from which I had so rudely awakened her. I was thus at liberty to study her more closely. I found her distinctly pleasing to look upon. In fact, I was not above admitting that Fortune, though playing me a cruel trick in thus placing my dinner in jeopardy, might have treated me much worse and denied me both companionship and refreshment in the wilderness.

I lit a cigarette and smoked in silence for some time, stealing an occasional glance at the fair stranger curled on the tonneau seat below me. The sun was beginning to decline a little into the west and the fierceness of the heat seemed to moderate with the waning of the afternoon. A light breeze rippled over the golden fields around me, stirring the heavy, languid air and, in its cooling breath I felt my torpor of spirit fall away suddenly and madness seize hold upon me.

A brilliant idea had come into my head. It was more than brilliant—it was pyrotechnic, coruscating, fiery, iridescent. It was likewise madness. I got down from my perch on the fence and stole softly back to the car. On the tool-box in the middle of the road stood the empty *apollinaris* bottle which had contributed so materially to my salvation. Seizing it, I hurried quickly down the road, breaking into a run when the corner was turned, and in a few minutes I was back at Applegath's car. I thereupon climbed in, lifted up the cushion of the driving seat and disclosed the metal tank which contained the gasoline supply for the engines. I knew about it, for before we had started I had seen Applegath measure with a stick the quantity it contained. I unscrewed the cap and, to my delight, with the aid of a little rubber tube which I had found, I discovered that I could siphon the gasolene into the bottle. Up the dusty road I sped with my precious freight to the other car and emptied my bottle into the tank. As I have said, the cars appeared to be exact duplicates, so far as I could tell, and I had no difficulty. The noise I made aroused the girl for the second time, and she sat up very much bewildered at my actions.

"Whatever are you doing?" she cried, her eyes widening with amazement.

"It's a direct inspiration from heaven," I answered, climbing down into the road. "The high gods have sent a sign. I'll be back in a minute and explain."

In one of the side baskets I found another empty bottle, and with the two I raced off down the road again. I got myself into a fearful heat, but wasted not a moment going or returning. When safely delivered of my second supply of gasoline, I sat down and began to fan myself feebly.

"You poor man," the girl remarked pityingly, "whatever did you go and get so hot for? Why are you racing up and down the road? Is it a course of treatment for anything?"

"No, it's dinner—Jack Macklem's dinner," I panted. "Now see here, I'm going to get ourselves out of this and I've been stealing the gasoline out of my friend's car. I left him plenty, so don't worry about him. I wouldn't care, anyway, if I'd pumped his tank dry. I don't know a thing about automobiles, as I told you, but it appeared to me that if all this car needed was gasoline, and the other car had it to spare, it was sheer ineptitude to sit here by the roadside, goodness only knows how long, waiting for rescue which may never come. Are you game to come along, for I'm going to set this car moving or know the reason why. I'll undertake to pick the road and keep it. Will you try it?"

"Yes, if you think it will really move; but I don't believe it. Billy worked for hours. Besides, it's dangerous to try to run one unless you understand all about it. Billy says so. He says it takes years of training."

"Well, if Billy came this far, I can go the rest," I retorted. "That is, if your Billy is Billy Beverley."

The iteration of Billy annoyed me, likewise the imputation that I couldn't run a motor-car if I set my mind to it. I had watched Applegath manipulate his levers and pedals and things, without knowing much about the why or the wherefore of the same, but I flattered myself I could get the hang of them in a very short while. To begin with I seized the handle projecting from the front of the car as I had watched Applegath do, with amused tolerance at the time, and turned it briskly. I turned and turned

and went on turning, until the perspiration started out on my face and the dust arose from under my feet, but still the car stood immovable in the sun.

"You have to do something to these levers first, I think," she hazarded.

I came round beside the car and looked, rather bewildered, at the medley of levers and pedals, but I would not face failure and allow my boasting to bring me into disrepute with this damsel. She leaned forward and touched a small handle by the steering-wheel.

"I remember now. You must start the sparking something or other. Billy explained it all to me. It makes the gasoline explode, or something. Try that."

Though the directions were vague and the explanation still more so, I felt something must be done, and I moved the handle up a few notches. I was in serious doubt. I didn't want to interfere in any way with the gasoline, and as for inviting or assisting it to indulge in anything like explosions seemed foolhardy beyond words. Still, if it was supposed to be used on these cars, it might be just as well to give it a chance. Then I went back to the front of the car again and turned the handle. After a couple of revolutions there was an answering clatter and hum from the inside of the machine and the car began to throb and vibrate violently.

"Hurrah!" the girl cried excitedly, standing up. "You've started it. It's just splendid!"

I climbed in hastily, pulled the first lever to my hand, which proved to be the throttle, and more by good fortune, or rather entirely with the help of that lady, who certainly was looking after me that day, pressed the mid-speed clutch, and we shot off down the road.

My blood flew to my head with excitement. I hardly knew what I was doing as I grasped the steering-wheel and guided the car into the middle of the road. I had infused this monster, this Frankenstein, with life,

and I was giddy with the miracle. I was conscious of the girl applauding behind me in the tonneau, and almost immediately she climbed over into the seat beside me, holding on by my shoulders to steady herself.

What did I care for Applegath and his property put in my keeping, now deserted so faithlessly, and rapidly being left in the rear? Or what of the luckless Billy and his dismay upon returning to find his car gone and only the tool-box in the middle of the road to assure him he had not made a mistake and come to the wrong place? Or what of my grip in Applegath's car and my consequent lack of suitable raiment for Macklem's dinner? It would all come right. Applegath would find the unhappy Billy and they would come along together. It only resolved itself into a change of partners and, as it happened, neither of them had proved himself worthy of us. And if they didn't meet—what matter? In the meantime—

It took me a few minutes to gauge the steering-gear and to make proper allowance for each turn. Several times we whirled along with two wheels in the ditch and in recovering would shoot across the road into a similar position on the other side. But I steadied down at last, and even grew bold enough to take my eyes for an instant from the road before me and snatch a look at my companion. She was unmistakably enjoying the adventure as much as I. Our start had been so sudden, she had had no time to fasten her veil properly under her chin, and it floated behind her in a long streamer. My own hat had long since been blown from my head, but I neither missed nor regarded it. I tooted deliriously on the horn as we scurried on to the main road, and, facing the sinking sun, sped on our way. We should make dinner easily if no misadventure befell. And Applegath and Billy! They would be mystified to complete stupefaction, of course, and neither in any way would be able to help the other solve the puzzle of our disappearance.

My companion shot a glance of frankest admiration at me from time to time, and in such beams I expanded, rejoicing in my pride of successful achievement. The rush of air fanned her cheeks to a glorious show of color, her lips were parted to inhale long breaths of enjoyment and her whole frame was a-quiver with the swift tides of excitement. I was perilously afraid of my charge, yet would not, for untold riches, have wished myself elsewhere nor abated one iota of my responsibility.

The car traveled gloriously, seeming to know how it carried my honor in addition to our two poor lives. The motors purred steadily and evenly, and I steadfastly kept foot and hand free from any allurements of lever or pedal, clutching only the steering-wheel firmly, for who could tell but that some random touch would send us skyrocketing into space, or halt us dead and reduce me to horrible abasement!

The smooth road slipped under us mile after mile. The shadows grew long athwart the way, and the dust of some jogging vehicle ahead of us hung in a glowing, golden glory. We shot from the half-twilight of elm-arched stretches of road back into the level beams again; skimmed tumultuously through hamlets, to the wild blare of the horn; toiled up grades where I had no knowledge of the gear change, and prayed inwardly that each gasp of the overstrained motors should not prove to be the last, and that they might serve us but a little while longer. The low sun was beating in my eyes, and we seemed to be running into the heart of it; swallowed up in a very sea of glowing color—a palpitating, vital opalescence.

We slid over the crest of the last hill, and shining beneath us were the waters of the river and the roofs of Bellefont peering through the trees. We dropped down into the dewy, scented valley where dusk had already fallen, merciful heaven guiding my hand aright to the brake, which saved us from disaster, and pure, unadul-

terated pride and vainglory made me toot the horn every inch of the way from the lodge gates, where I came within an ace of losing a wheel, to the very doors of the great house itself.

The hideous clamor drew the inmates to the doorstep, and foremost was Jack Macklem watching us amazedly. Then, at the vital moment, I lost my head a little and forgot brake and throttle, and dared not experiment. As we whirled past I cried out excitedly:

"Come and stop it, someone!"

Round the circle of the driveway we sped, across the tennis-court, over two large flower-beds and back again before the cheering crowd now grouped on the lawn. With really beautiful unanimity they all proceeded to take refuge in the shelter of the deep stone porch, from which they shouted encouragement.

"Get aboard and stop it!" I yelled. "I can't!"

And again we flashed by on another tour of depredation and destruction. Then young Jimmy Macklem ran and headed us off as we were preparing to plunge into a thick laburnum hedge, leaped for the tonneau, hurling himself in over the side. He reached over my shoulder and jammed the emergency brake hard down, then slipped beside me and closed the throttle, slowing us down beautifully alongside the doorway. Everyone came forward applauding as I helped my companion down, and, turning to Macklem, requested gravely to be presented. This he accomplished with equal gravity, and the girl inclined as gravely to my bow.

"Now, are we in time for dinner?" I asked. "That's the main reason for this circus. I staked my reputation on reaching here in time for dinner."

"Yes. Lots of time, old man. But what reputation as a chauffeur had you to stake, anyway? This is a new role for you. I didn't know you had a car or knew how to run one. I rather thought you disapproved—"

"Oh—ah—yes, of course," I interrupted. "But there's no saying what one can do when one really tries.

This was a case of beauty in distress which called forth my best and noblest endeavors. Besides, I didn't want to miss your dinner."

Again the wild blare of an auto-horn sounded up the avenue, and there shot into sight Applegath in his car with Billy Beverley beside him.

"He's raving, raving," I thought. "'Nunc dimittis' is the watchword."

He slowed down handsomely with the ease of a practiced chauffeur, and when he caught sight of me in the forefront of the group his jaw fell in undisguised amazement.

"Well! You here?" were his first words. "I am blowed."

"Yes, of course, I'm here," I assented pleasantly. "You wouldn't bring me, so I came along myself. Where did you expect I'd be?"

"In the nearest ditch with the car on top of you, or on top of as much of you as wasn't strewn about the landscape. How in the name of goodness did you manage?"

"In the other car—Beverley's car, of course. I ran it out."

"You didn't! You couldn't! You haven't sense enough to run a p'ram'. Besides, it had run out of gasoline."

"I know all that," I retorted loftily, "but yours hadn't, you see. I stole some. There was precious little sense in both of us sitting like mummies on the roadside waiting to be rescued when I could get one car to go. I considered the ant, as you suggested, to good advantage. So we came on. Got my bag safe?"

"Yes. But it's more than you deserve by a long shot. I nearly had a fit when I came back and couldn't find you. I didn't think I had done the right thing leaving you all alone in the wild, rude wilderness without a guardian. My conscience smote me for it afterward."

"All the smiting your conscience gives you won't trouble you any," I flung back.

"Never you mind. I got the fitting out from town quicker than I expected and wasted more time looking for you than I did in getting the car

fixed. I only headed here in desperation, thinking you must have got a lift of some sort, and round the first corner found Billy weeping over his tool-box in the middle of the road, claiming his car must have been too good to live and that it had been caught up to heaven, for it couldn't possibly have been moved otherwise."

"That's all he knows about automobiles."

"Huh! Is Saul among the prophets? But I don't believe yet that you ran it all this way yourself, and Billy says the girl didn't know beans about it, either."

"Puzzle it out for yourself, then," I remarked condescendingly. "Live and learn, my son, and don't imagine the only way to move an auto is by bad-wording it. A little love and patience will work miracles—understanding, sympathy and insight, Applegath. Pray for enlightenment and a larger outlook upon things."

Then I went indoors, and presently, clothed with purple and fine linen, I led my fair companion of the motor-car down to dinner, for, as Jack had said, since we had shared the dangers of the afternoon together, we should also reap our reward in company. Billy looked somewhat dark at this, but no one minded him—ourselves least of all.

The dinner proved quite worth coming for—likewise several other things. Applegath joined me on the terrace overlooking the river, where I strolled smoking a cigar. His manner was most deferential, spiced with a suspicion of a deeper intimacy. There was a hint of fellowship about it, as though he looked upon me in a new light, as a member and brother-craftsman in some guild or order. I almost expected to be assailed with some strange sign or grip, indicative of secret understanding and a common purpose in life.

"Well, old chap, how do you like it? Isn't it the very finest sport going? You'll be buying one of your own, I suppose."

"Oh, I don't know," I replied slowly. "It isn't altogether the car, and that. It's who you have to go along with you. I'll see about that part of it first, perhaps."

And I did—but that was some time afterward. She helped me choose the first car. It was the same make as Applegath's and Billy's, but we were careful to explain to them that it was not to be construed in any way as a compliment to their knowledge. It was only on account of what their cars had been responsible for one bright, summer afternoon.



NOWADAYS

FIRST SOCIETY WOMAN—What makes you think she was married twice?
SECOND SOCIETY WOMAN—She has two children.



PAYMENT INDEFINITELY DEFERRED

POET—I write for posterity.

EDITOR—That will be all right; we pay on publication.

CODFISH ARISTOCRACY

By Wallace Irwin

OF all the fish that swim or swish
 In ocean's deep autocracy,
There's none possess such haughtiness
 As the codfish aristocracy.

A Cod I knew whose blood was blue,
 A courtly and a subtle fish,
Who felt a scorn for baser born
 Mere mackerel or cuttlefish.

The sawfish blade to him betrayed
 The hall-mark of the artisan;
The swordfish, too, our hero knew
 For reasons merely partisan.

Both day and night, in sorry plight,
 With sadness and humility,
The Cod would sigh, "If only I
 Were raised to the nobility,

"Much would I thank some dame of rank
 To form a social bond with me,
To drop a line and show, in fine,
 She wished to correspond with me."

This cod-like thought, oft fancied, brought
 A sentimental tenderness;
Till day by day he pined away
 To fair, patrician slenderness.

But man or fish whose dearest wish
 Is faithfully idealized,
(If long enough and strong enough)
 Will come to see it realized.

So by and bye there floated nigh
 The Princess Sue of Dolibote,
Who, with a rod and bait for cod,
 Sat fishing from her jolly-boat.

A chance at last! The bait was cast
 Before that Cod of olden line—
A wondrous fly of dainty dye
 Suspended by a golden line.

The minnows nigh exclaimed, "Oh, my!
 We do not like the look of it!"
 But Mister Cod, with scornful nod,
 Swam up and ate the hook of it.

The line she drew, and up he flew,
 An elegant, though swishing, Cod,
 Right through the blue where Princess Sue
 Sat toying with her fishing-rod.

He landed—flap!—upon her lap,
 And lay with gasps of gratitude,
 Exclaiming thus, "Excuse the fuss—
 I'm dying of beatitude!"

And so he died, ensconced in pride,
 Yet with a due humility.
 He'd had his wish—that scheming fish
 Was raised to the nobility.

This goes to show, of all below
 The submarine autocracy
 There's none possess such haughtiness
 As the Codfish aristocracy.



POSITIVE PROOF

"I DON'T know whether he dances or not."
 "He doesn't. I have danced with him."



IN CHICAGO

MRS. DE STYLE (*to child of divorced parents*)—Are you mama's pretty
 little darling?
 CHILD—Dunno; the court hasn't decided yet.

THE MASQUE OF VENUS

By Kate Masterson

THIS used to be the name of a hideous papier-mâché and rubber contrivance that women put on, upon retiring, for the purpose of softening and whitening the face, removing blemishes and imparting what the advertisements called a "warm, healthful glow."

There were holes for the eyes and strings that tied the affair and held it in place. With one on, a woman looked so much of a fright that she would scare any burglar that ever carried a dark-lantern, for burglars, like other criminals, have a peculiar abhorrence for the supernatural, and persons unused to ghosts are apt to associate them with horrible things.

The manufacturer of these masques probably never thought of them as symbolic, but they were significant of the fact that woman must in all cases be on guard with her world if she would be graceful. Neither the upheaval of her soul nor the dishevelment of her hair can be placed on view with anything like good effect.

Man may rage, storm, fight and go through all sorts of strenuous gladiatorial convulsions bodily and mentally, and people call him strong, terrible, powerful. But woman, even the Sardou heroines and the Ibsen ladies, must mingle a grain of decorum with her emotions and keep her hair in curl through grief and joy, rage and despair.

When a revolting spectacle is called for, the makers of melodrama know well enough that a Mother Frochard or some other terrible old woman with uncombed locks and ungirded waist need only show herself to win the hisses and the jeers of the gallery.

Feminine wickedness may sometimes lurk successfully beneath golden hair and blue eyes, but when you associate it with personal ugliness and disorder you get a combination impossible to tolerate.

Some talented women actors of rugged feature and brains that disdained fallals have essayed to become famous by personating upon the stage the hateful old crones of history, but invariably the efforts, although artistic, have failed to win the popularity that tends to fame or fortune. There can be no feminine Lears or Shylocks to thrill us with the tempestuous passions of age, and history is kind enough to soften with some weakness the records of even the most terrible of its women.

Du Barry, Pompadour, Medici and the Russian Catherine—how time has smoothed the stormy pages of their lives until we weep for them, and in their ruffs and powdered hair enshrine them in our boudoirs in cunning gold frames and talk cleverly about their interesting careers.

Time is their masque, the most wonderful of all, turning them into sketchy wraiths of what they really were, dimming their sins in a haze of tears—until we almost love them for all that they were not. A woman's name that lives through the centuries need not be laid away in lavender.

Modernity, that has done so much for woman, has also taken much away, and sometimes it seems as though Venus were about to lay aside her masque for good. We tremble in the throes of a time when lovely woman appears to topple a bit on her pedestal—the veils of reserve removed with

the fluttering fichus and the lace scarfs of the old-time heroine laid away; garments that, like the little shawls which our great-grandmothers wore, had more significance than warmth.

In their place we wear jaunty sweatshirts fashioned like a man's or else made gay with bright buttons and rakish little pockets, giving freedom to the form and allowing generally for the exercise and exertion necessary to golf, walking, riding, motoring—all the outdoor sports that are part of a woman's life today.

What women have accomplished and what they have become in this magic woman-age we live in is the story of the present rather than of the past—the world rings with it. Society, the stage, literature, the law, science, all have their women prophets. There has been a breaking down of fences—a clearing away of brambles, and the woman who would escape the opprobrium that clings to the old fashions overdoes, rather than not, the rules of the new game.

Is it worth the candle? While we revel at present in the social picnic attitude, casting old-time decorum to the wind, will not the inevitable reaction leave women bereft of a great part of their charm?—elusiveness, the invisible domino of reserve that used to be called modesty, a word that we hear very little of today in the up to date lexicon.

Dinner talk now includes such topics as divorce, elopements and racy family rows that have become newspaper history. These subjects are not rated as gossip, which deals rather with matters that are not yet public property. Such matters are only talked of at tea-tables, and it must be admitted that we are never dull. But our black coffee stories have become clubby to an extent that embarrasses a butler, although the debutante and the dowager express equal amusement and neither flinches under the new code.

The cigarette is no longer the exclusive property of the lady villain of melodrama—it is the mainstay of the fashionable novelist—part of the out-

fitting of the sweet girl graduate and the bride, for fashion advocates it, and it is quite continental to have one's own special brand with a silk tip matching the complexion and a little golden cigarette-case swinging from the chate-laine.

This delightful freedom of manner we accept in a different spirit, however, from the continental, or even the Englishwoman, who, despite her propensity for smoking, insists on many of the small proprieties that never occur to us. Abroad, womankind is still hemmed in by restrictions that do not touch us, either as maids or as matrons—we are so completely free and so conscious of it—that it requires no seer or no Japanese crystal to trace the shadow of a decline in man's chivalrous attitude toward us with the growth of the new camaraderie.

Conversation between men and women at a modern function is like a mental waltz between brains, the ideas embracing each other in a whirl of invisible music. Propriety is never lost sight of, but the nearness is exhilarating as wine, and the up to date girl thinks happily of the dull days when women trailed off after dinner to dreary, manless drawing-rooms, like exiled penitents, leaving to men the golden hour with their cigars.

Of course the up to date woman is too clever to misunderstand the situation. She never but half lifts the masque, and the reason that men find the new condition so agreeable is that ten or twelve years ago they were forced to seek further afield for this comfortable after-dinner chumship. But in this particular crisis women showed the natural shrewdness that characterizes them as a sex. They stepped down from the throne in order to cope with the man who brilliantly summed up the situation in the famous toast: "To Women—once our superiors—now our equals!"

How long will this new attitude allure in comparison with the old bewitchment of the undiscovered soul and the garmented heart?—the woman in the boudoir surrounded by her mys-

terious frills and laces, a most important part of the Venus masque since the time that lady rose from the sea shrouded in the rosy mists of sun-kissed foam.

So interesting and compelling is the newer type of woman that the novelist and the playwright have made her their own. She shines forth as a speaker of scintillating lines, the centre of stirring situations—a piquantly dominating figure, although no poet sings sonnets to her eyebrow.

She is not a creature to set to music—the clubby girl, the feminine good-fellow. Nor are those noble woman souls that meet in council now and then to regulate the affairs of nations and the size of other people's families.

Fashions have changed woman's contour alarmingly within the centuries. She has evolved from the ornate draperies of the Greek period and the Middle Ages to the absurdly drawn waist and puffy panniers of the Renaissance and Watteau epochs, then contracting into the slim sheath of the Empire only to burst into the effulgence of 1830.

But within this outer shell the woman has remained practically the same, and the sudden hip or the straight front have not been deeper than the bone—the whalebone. Woman has always worn her masque, and the question that the Sphinx has asked since it first saw the sun rise—has been always "Woman?"

We moderns threaten to answer the

question—and destroy the enchantment in one fell swoop, for mystery carries us while it eludes and we follow blindly like children after a piper. The boudoir woman has held her own from the Byzantine to the Bridge age, and the question that echoes in clairaudient ears is—can we who have emerged from the chiffons so boldly resume them gracefully when the cigarette is burned to its tip and the pipe of our popularity has gone out?

What, then, when the recessional is sounded for the woman unafeard of mice and men—the advanced athletic girl who knows law and logic better than the poets and who prefers a good bull-pup to a chaperon? If matrimony claims her—and of course that is what she aims at in spite of her mortar-board—she can relapse gracefully into enforced femininity and pose as a glorious sacrifice to sex.

But what of the unattached girl—the girl in the various walks of work once sacred to the trousered male, too magnificently emancipated to care whether her hat is on straight or the end of her nose in need of a powder-puff? What can she do when all is said and done but exhibit herself as a terrible example of the blight that came upon womankind during the wonderful cigarette and bridge-whist era, when the masque of Venus was laid aside and the game of life became so absorbing that, interested in our own selfish play, we absolutely forgot that problematical person—the Woman of the Future?



WHAT HE WOULD DO WITH IT

KINDLY OLD LADY (*to urchin with a cigarette*)—You're not going to smoke that nasty thing, little boy?

URCHIN—Oh, no, mum.

"But what are you going to do with it?"

"I'm takin' it home fer a present fer me fashionable mudder."

Sept. 1905

THE FAMILY PACK

KING OF CLUBS—that's her papa—
 Just how many, I don't know;
 This and that, *et cetera*,
 President of So-and-So.
 What a fortune he must owe
 When he has the dues to pay!
 Still, the game is never slow
 If you have the card to play.

QUEEN OF DIAMONDS—Mama,
 Gleaming, glistening, aglow;
 Nothing in America
 Can surpass her jeweled show.
 Dazzling brilliants in a row,
 New devices every day.
 Cost? What does that matter, though,
 If you have the card to play?

QUEEN OF HEARTS—and that is—ah!
 How a fellow's heart will go!
 That is *She—incognita*,
 Save to—(see the name below).
 Lips—a crimson rose a-blown,
 Eyes that lead the stars astray;
 Everything just *comme il faut*,
 If you have the card to play.

ENVOY

KNAVE—myself—to end your woe,
 Wait until you hear her say:
 "You've a chance with LOVE & Co.,
 If you have the card to play!"

FELIX CARMEN.



THIS COMMERCIAL AGE

PENFIELD—What are you going to do now you have sold your great picture?
 SMERE—Dramatize it.
 "And then?"
 "Turn it into a popular novel."

THE MEASURE OF HIS GREATNESS

A WARE RIVER CLUB TALE

By Henry Sydnor Harrison

WHEN Millicent, in a veritable whirl of delight, imparted to him the glad tidings that the great Paul Wrexham, poet of love, essayist and lecturer, and, in addition, the latest and most ecstatic of her literary loves, was actually to be in town for a few days with friends, Ranville groaned. This comment, however, being spiritual rather than vocal, passed without censure; and Millicent, attributing to a kind of perfectly negligible jealousy the obvious lack of enthusiasm with which he received the wonderful news, rattled gaily on with the details of Wrexham's expected visit.

Of all the people in that town, Ranville felt nowadays that he had the heaviest grudge against Miss Martha Poyner, spinster, of the Bellmont Institute. Miss Poyner it was who, for self-glory and incidental emolument, had organized the Young Ladies' Literary Club, the avowed purpose of which was, in the words of the folder, to "promote a fondness for the best in current literature and to cultivate the artistic and literary taste of the young ladies of Bellmont"—at a very reasonable figure per young lady. On its face this design appears not only innocent but positively laudable; and perhaps only Ranville knew what incalculable harm it was really capable of working.

Prompted by the whim of an evil hour Millicent had joined the club; as the nicest and prettiest girl of them all she had been instantly elected president; and from that hour, in Ranville's gloomy conviction, her ruin had been assured. In three months her grace-

ful blond head had become so crammed with notions about the nobility of literature as a calling, and the almost divine gifts of the men who exercised it, that she made an idol of every insignificant magazine writer—with decently regular features—to the infinite exclusion of mere ordinary men of affairs. A long train of prime favorites had marched through her doting fancy; and now for a full month her adoration had centered unswervingly about the person of young Paul Wrexham.

Ranville's protest against the Literary Club and its pernicious teachings had at first found expression in a series of lengthy arguments, which passed through Millicent's ears about as inconsequently as the breeze of summer floats through the opened casement. Later, annoyed but at heart unchangeable, he reached the irrevocable decision that, until she exhibited a decidedly more receptive frame of mind, he would never again ask her to marry him. From this it is no fair inference that he intended to see her, in the future, as little as possible; and, indeed, it was at his instance that they were now walking, in the splendid afternoon, down the street, westward and toward the open country.

Even in winter that is a beautiful street—wide to the point of wonder, level as a millpond, tall trees of no recent planting skirting its sides in long procession, and back of them the handsomest houses in town. Farther out it opens suddenly into a great plaza, round as a silver dollar, dropped down into which stands, with his head bared to all weathers, the equestrian statue

of General Lee; and beyond that it runs easily off into a country road, *hard, smooth, split by the electric car-line* and flanked by a pair of footpaths. And trudging one or the other of these, you see ahead of you, on swelling ground and in sharp relief against the winter sky, the bold silhouette of the Ware River Clubhouse.

It was a glorious day, with a dropping sun, a white-tipped landscape and air like the tingle of a cold bath. About Millicent's way of walking there was nothing utilitarian, nothing commercial. She walked like a man, for the love of it, rather than like one who walks because that is the only way to get somewhere. Ranville looked down at her; and noticing—not, however, for the first time—how lovely she was, knew, as always, that whether he wanted to or not, he forgave her everything.

"He's going to stay," bubbled Millicent, "with Hemenway Brown; and Hemenway has sworn that he will bring him to see me right away."

Ranville winced. At White Sulphur, a couple of summers before, he had chanced to run into Wrexham, and had found him, though long of graceful language, a little scant of gentle breeding. Knowing him for a man who held women lightly as a flower, to be plucked for an hour's pleasure and flung as idly away, Ranville felt his coming to Bellomont now, in the very heyday, as it were, of Millicent's adoration, a needlessly unpleasant stroke of fate.

"I'm afraid," he said, but not unsympathetically, "you won't find him quite as—nice as his books."

"Henry! Of course I will. I know I'll just adore him. I would anybody who wrote such lovely things."

"Do you really believe," said Ranville presently, "that what a man writes has anything much to do with what he is—that it really shows what kind of man he is?"

She was round-eyed with surprise. "Anything! Why, it has everything! What a man writes *is* what he is. Why,

of course! Where would he get beautiful thoughts from, unless he had a beautiful mind?"

Ranville, who had threshed over this ground with her a good many times in the past, smiled a little sadly. "Adapt them, maybe—it really doesn't make much difference. It still remains one thing to write down a noble sentiment in a notebook and quite another to live that way; and—"

"Oh, Henry, for heaven's sake stop preaching! I know you think differently about all that, and I just know you're wrong. If you would only be fair and unprejudiced about it, you'd see that nobody could write things that were noble and that showed—well, showed real nobility, you know, without being that way themselves; and so—"

"That's just where you make a great mistake, Millicent," began Ranville.

"I know you think so, Henry; but good gracious! I'm not going to think everything you think just because you tell me to—"

"I ought to know that by this time. But—"

"But still you want me to. I know. Well, I'm not. There, why do you delight in making me cross? You know I've often said, anyway, that it isn't so much the goodness of the people who write splendid books like Mr. Wrexham's that I admire as I do their intellect. Brains is what I adore—are, I mean."

"But there are certainly other ways of showing brains than by writing books with them. Plenty of men right here in this town have more brains—if that's what you really like—than a great many literary chaps; but because they happen to be a little different sort of brains you never give them credit for anything."

"Meaning—you, I suppose?"

"That is a long story to go into so late in the afternoon; but, since you mention it—"

"Anyway," she interrupted rather abstractedly, "they're not the kind of brains I admire; excellent brains in their way, I haven't any doubt, but

not just the kind to put thrills into a person— And oh, Henry,” she burst out, with eyes suddenly sparkling, “I’ve just had the loveliest idea! I’ll ask him to address the Literary Club at the meeting next Thursday. The girls will be crazy about it.”

Wrexham, in the due course of things, arrived in town and put up with Hemenway Brown, whose brother he had known at the University; and almost immediately he threw out a number of queries as to the age, station and personal characteristics of one of the young ladies in the town. To Brown’s rather surprised inquiries as to what in the world he knew of Miss Millicent Page the great man answered a little evasively, thinking it none of Brown’s business to know that he had in his pocketbook at the moment two excessively admiring letters signed with that pretty autograph. The upshot of the dialogue was that, a little later on the same afternoon, Wrexham was pressing, to the accompaniment of a very winning smile, the slender hand of Miss Page.

Millicent thought him even better looking than his photograph. He was, in general effect, not unlike a softer edition of Ranville—of good height, blond, well set-up and agreeably featured. Whatever there was of strength in Ranville’s face, however, was, in Wrexham’s, toned down into something gentler. The poet’s eyes were soft, languorous and full of sentimental meaning; his mouth was small, sweet and rather slackly hung; the smooth oval of his face ended in a pointed and inconspicuous chin. Wrexham had all the superficial points that a woman first demands. On the street women turned to look at him, and in a drawing-room he was magnificent. To Millicent, from the first, he appeared to be violently attracted, and he became at once her unfailing attendant.

Miss Page was obviously pleased by the great man’s attention. Not only did it gratify her vanity to be thus singled out by the noble author whose

verse she had so often read with a swelling heart, but in a nearer way the glitter of the man’s personality both dazzled and fascinated her. Ranville watched the growing intimacy with profound though helpless misgiving. To spare Millicent the acquaintance of a man whom he instinctively felt to be unworthy would have been a service out of the innermost and dearest recesses of his heart; but he knew that any interference, even if he could honorably make it, she would have warmly resented.

After remaining aloof for several days, in some perplexity, he called on Tuesday evening. To his deep annoyance but scarcely to his surprise, Wrexham was with her; and he himself was so evidently *de trop*, so plainly the undesired third to turn a company into a crowd, that, after chatting restrainedly for ten minutes, he rose on some pretext whose flimsiness she did not seek to expose, and shut the front door, with much gentleness, behind him. The next day he chanced to meet her on the street, and, despite the obvious stiffness of his bow, she hailed him delightedly.

“Oh, Henry, the best news! He has promised to speak at the meeting tomorrow. I was just persuading him when you came in last night. The girls are all wild over it.”

“How very nice!”

“Nice! It’s as lovely as can be. It’s the first time he has accepted an invitation to speak for months. Oh, he’s so adorable! I asked him if he minded talking to such a handful—why, he talked to two thousand people once—and he said no, that his purpose in speaking at all was not to impress the natives but simply to please me.”

“Very graceful of the great man,” said Ranville. “Delightful.”

“Wasn’t it? Of course, I was as pleased as anything, and it will be a regular triumph for the club. I’m out making arrangements now, so that everything can go off without the slightest hitch, and inviting a few people. And, by the way, don’t you want to go?”

If you do, I'd be glad to have you go with us."

"With you and——?"

"Rob—my brother. You know, Tom Tayloe is dining Mr. Wrexham at the Bellevue Club tomorrow night—early. It's too bad they fell on the same evening, but Mr. Wrexham has solemnly vowed to be on hand in plenty of time. Of course, don't go unless you really care to."

Ranville hesitated half an instant. If he had consulted only the promptings of his own feelings he would have laughed the invitation, with a dash of bitterness, down the wind. But perceiving that her mind was deeply set upon making this meeting an unqualified success, he reflected that he might be able, in some way, to contribute to that end. Besides, in making himself a sharer in everything that interested Millicent—indeed, merely in the being with her, he found the highest pleasure that he knew.

"I'd like very much to go," he said. "I'll call for you about eight, shall I?"

II

ATTACHED to the new lecture-room of the Second Presbyterian Church there are a couple of neat dressing-rooms; and in one of these, at hard upon eight-thirty the following evening, sat Ranville, his ear alert for a rapping upon the street door. It was the matter of the gas supply that was the cause of his coming thither; for, by an unhappy chance, the flow that night was so poor that the hall, as they had seen immediately upon entering it, was shrouded in the darkness of twilight. At Millicent's almost hysterical entreaty to have something done about it without a minute's delay, he had hurried back and telephoned dire threats upon the company unless they immediately supplied a better light; and now, hardly less anxious than Millicent, he awaited the coming of the gas man. Peering out through the back drop just now, he had noted in the glimmering dusk that only the familiar

white hat with the nodding plumes had enabled him to locate Millicent, where she sat, beside her brother, only three rows back; and knowing how all her hopes had been dedicated to the making of a completely successful evening, he regarded this unlooked-for complication as almost cruelly unlucky.

Ranville lit a cigarette, trod out the match, threw his overcoat over his arm, sat down and waited. Though he would willingly and instantly have made any sacrifice to make happy the least of Millicent's hours, his feeling toward her at that moment was as near impatience as was possible to him. His strong faith in her ultimate good sense had been severely shaken. That she had not, indeed, at her very first meeting with Wrexham been able to look beneath the brilliant veneer into the real nature of the man, had been a signal disappointment to Ranville. Fondly he had hoped that their acquaintance would be a thing of a day, and that Millicent, on coming really to know him, would at least to herself acknowledge the impossibility of any friendship between them. But in the event it had turned out very differently; and he wondered, with an anxiety not altogether selfish, what could be the end of an acquaintanceship which had rushed forward on such galloping feet.

To Ranville this subject was a profoundly interesting one, and he sank into an absorbing meditation. Minutes passed. His neglected cigarette burned down and scorched his fingers, and he started sharply. Hastily jerking out his watch, he saw with dismay that it was twenty minutes to nine.

"Confound it!" he said aloud, uneasily. "Where the deuce is he?"

Wrexham had not yet put in an appearance; and the arrival of the gas man now instantly sank into a matter of minor importance. The lecture should have begun ten minutes ago; and he could imagine with what perturbation Millicent, out in the audience, was waiting from moment to moment for Wrexham's appearance on the stage. Could the poet have met

with any kind of accident that prevented his coming? Could he have been taken ill? Or could he have been delayed in any way at the little dinner Tayloe was giving him at the club?

Ah! the little dinner! Struck by a thought of marked unpleasantness, he sprang up and stepped hurriedly toward the street door.

To his straining ears there was no other sound than the loud ticking of his watch, indifferently marking the passing of the minutes. Outside everything was still. Finally, far away, he heard the rolling of a carriage wheel—heard it growing louder and nearer, and the thump of a horse's hoofs. A cab dashed up to the side entrance of the hall; he could hear men getting out, and a voice which he recognized as Wrexham's, though curiously altered, somewhat loudly anathematizing the distance their driver had halted from the carriage block. An instant later the street door banged open, and Wrexham stood vividly upon the threshold, blocking out the form, but not the rather worried features, of Hemenway Brown behind him.

Ranville's eye at once beheld Wrexham, and a black rage swelled into his heart that seemed like to burst it. One glance was enough to reveal the whole miserable truth. The jaunty tilt of the silk hat toward the extreme rear of his head had, in itself, a significance as complete as it was nauseating. Add to that, too, a face flushed to a hue excessively rubicund and a white lawn tie slipped to a point beneath the lobe of the left ear; add also a drooping eye and feet slightly rambling, and a voice thick beyond misunderstanding, and it need not be explained too lengthily what was in Ranville's mind as he turned, in swift and despairing disgust, to Hemenway Brown.

There was that in Brown's face, however, which made anything in the nature of reproach simply not to be thought of.

"I'm glad to see you here, Henry," he began hurriedly. "Let me speak to you a moment, please."

But Wrexham, advancing with joy-

ous uncertainty, and in no other humor than to be wholly the centre of attention, broke in.

"Evening, Ranville, old chap," he said, reeling slightly and removing his hat in a flourishing and very elaborate bow. "Evening, Ranville—old—chap. Just been to a mos' d'lightful little—dinner-party. Only eight of us round the—festal board, but mos' d'lightful it was. For a mos' agreeable evening give me a party of eight d'lightful fellows. Or say nine, so's to 'include—Ranville—old—chap."

Ranville, not trusting himself to dwell longer upon this unpleasant sight of a great man's mental dishabille, moved sharply away; and Brown caught Wrexham roughly by the arm.

"There, Wrexham, for God's sake shut up! We are very late with this lecture as it is. Pull yourself together now and try to brace up—"

"Lecture! Gad, y'know, I forgot all about that thing. But pooh! just a handful of—provincial young ladies who don't know anything about—why, hang it—about anything. And, b'sides, the girls—why, hang it, y'know, I guess anything I say will just about go with *them*. See what I mean? But say—what was the—subject, d'ye know?"

Brown started an angry answer, but, catching a signal in Ranville's eye, checked himself and laid a hand firmly on Wrexham's shoulder.

"I'll tell you about that presently," he said; "now, sit down on this bench and wait a minute till I come back."

"A'right. And it's quite im'terial about the subject, old chap. I c'n produce at will some—clever gen'ralties that'll tickle 'em. Never fear. A few subtleties about love, *par exemple*, and how—it—b'hooves us all to live beautifully—wisely—and well—"

A door shut softly; and the great man, perceiving vaguely that he was alone, lounged still further back upon the bench and allowed his mellow voice to trail off into silence.

In the other dressing-room Brown, entering last, shut the door and leaned heavily against it. Which of the two

men felt most harshly toward Wrexham at that moment it would, perhaps, have been difficult to determine; but Brown, at least, was the readiest to express it.

"I'm damned sore," he broke out savagely. "He's not my friend, anyway—barely an acquaintance of my brother's. But I've had to trot him around and stand for his caddishness. You've no idea. And tonight, my God! it was awful!"

Ranville, desperately cudgeling his brains for the way which would now work out with the least embarrassment to Millicent, felt that his own feelings were being accurately described.

"What on earth did Tayloe give you fellows to drink?"

"It wasn't that. As far as that goes, he tanks up on the quiet by himself. Why, our man has picked up three empty flasks on the grass outside his window. If that were only the worst! But at the table tonight he was bragging that he was a famous lady-killer, and telling how some girl—here in town, mind you—had fairly chucked herself at his head. I believe if we had let him he would have given us her name and full—"

"Never mind—that," breathed Ranville hoarsely; and Brown, looking up, saw that his face was suddenly quite gray.

"Exactly," said Brown less sharply. "That was pretty much the way I felt when Dick Pinckney, sitting next to me, pushed back his chair and—but, by Jove! I forgot. We all swore solemnly afterward that we would never mention the matter outside. The fellows were white clear through. You won't speak of it, will you, Henry?"

"It's not likely," said Ranville, with an effort; and Brown, who knew him, understood at once that a hydraulic press could never squeeze a word out of him.

Just then, outside, somebody pounded the floor with his feet, and somebody else took it up with a hand-clapping; and in a minute there was quite a chorus of similar noises, intimating pleasantly that, so far as the

wishes of the audience were concerned, the entertainment might now proceed.

Brown frowned and glanced hastily at his watch. "By Jove! it's ten minutes to nine. Whatever we are going to do we must do it right away. Now—shall we risk sending him on?"

"No," said Henry flatly, "we shall not. If he launched out in his present condition to tell these young ladies how to live beautifully—well, I shouldn't care to be responsible for the consequences." He thoughtfully jingled a bunch of keys in his pocket, and, fixing Brown with an unseeing eye, his brow gradually cleared. "By the way, who was going to introduce him?"

"I was. The Poyner woman's laid up and telephoned me this afternoon. I suppose I'd better go on now, give 'em a little song and dance to the effect that Wrexham's been suddenly taken ill, and send the crowd home. What do you think? It's fishy, I know, but there's nothing else."

Brown's hand was on the knob.

"Wait a minute, will you, Brown? Don't dismiss the people just yet."

Brown, a little surprised, turned back, and Ranville, struggling hard against his native reserve, paused; but after the merest instant he went on, quite evenly: "The president of this club, Miss Page, personally arranged for the lecture tonight, and I happen to know that she is tremendously set on having it take place. Of course, nobody will believe that Wrexham is ill. Everybody will know that he was at Tayloe's dinner, and the truth is certain to leak out. It—it will be a keen mortification to Miss Page."

"But," said Brown wonderingly, "a minute ago you said you thought he wasn't fit to go on."

Ranville turned and faced him squarely. "The main thing, of course," he said slowly, "is that there should be a lecture here tonight. What it's all about, as Wrexham said, makes comparatively little difference. I suppose you've noticed, by the way, how weak the gas is tonight. Your own mother could hardly recognize you from the front row."

Brown started.

"Several times," continued Ranville, "it has been suggested to me that Wrexham and I are, in a general way, quite a lot alike. Same build, same coloring, same way of talking. In short," he concluded, with a sudden realization that precious time was fast slipping away, "in this dark hall, I believe it would not be difficult for a man somewhat like me to pass himself off for Wrexham—and give the lecture. How does it impress you?"

Brown, who was a man of swift mind and not too many words, dropped down on a bench and thought it over, drumming softly on his cuff. After a moment, doubtful, still surprised, he looked up. "Well," he said slowly, "a man might manage to put it through, I suppose, if he had a barrel of nerve—"

"Not that. A man would have to put it through if he knew it was the only way—"

Ranville broke off; and Brown, understanding, regarded him with a new and admiring eye. The difficulties and risks of what Ranville wanted to do did not, of course, escape him. A stout heart and unfailing determination alone would secure a success, to which he himself must, in some measure, contribute; and seeing plainly his part in Ranville's hope, and instantly resolving to play it as whole-heartedly as he knew, he sprang up and took Henry's hand in a clasp to which a certain excitement lent a grip like a vise.

"You're a brick, Henry. I'm your man for all that I can do. I only wish there was more time to work up something to say."

Ranville smiled and gave a little sigh of relief. "I knew you were a sport," he said quietly. "It sounds worse than it really is, and I believe that we can work it. And luck's with us on the subject—'The Decline of Poetry' it is, you know. By a stroke of Providence I read a magazine article of his covering the same general subject only a few weeks ago."

Brown brightened visibly. "Now I know you can do it," he said confi-

dently; "and the sooner we make the move, the better. But first we'll have to look in and break the news to Wrexham. If he's inclined to make trouble, I won't hesitate to tie him up, gag him and lock him in."

A moment later they opened the door of the other dressing-room, and immediately both halted in obvious and simultaneous relief. All fear of possible obstreperousness from Wrexham was definitely removed. The great man lay sunk in a heavy and unlovely sleep. His length sprawled ungracefully over a bench and two chairs, his coattails dusting the floor beside his fallen hat, Paul Wrexham, poet, essayist, boudoir idler and lion among ladies, undoubtedly snored.

Ranville looked at Brown and smiled, though his eyes at the moment were not precisely what would be termed mirthful. "That seems to end him for this evening, I think."

"And for good," said Brown hotly. "He'll leave tomorrow, I swear it." He caught himself with a jerk. "Well—if you have the faintest idea what you're going to say—I suppose there's nothing to gain by delay."

"Not a thing. Let's go on." And without more speech he swung open the door that led to the stage.

Brown hung back a trifle, and looked at Ranville a little shamefacedly. "This business of introducing you as Wrexham gets me a little," he confessed. "I'm a darned fool about telling the truth. Always have been—"

He stopped suddenly. On the far side of the audience a literary young lady just then caught sight of them in the doorway, and started a clapping which swiftly grew; and so, with an interchange of glances that was like a commitment of themselves to fate, they shook hands and stepped alertly upon the stage. Both seated themselves for an instant, while the audience, seen dimly in the dusk, loudly applauded, and the thought flashed swiftly into both their minds that it ought to be a go. Then Brown, with a very easy manner, at least partly

assumed, rose and took a step or two forward.

Ranville sat quite still, staring straight ahead of him, trying to remember the look of the first page of the magazine article which, in his quiet effort to keep up with whatever interested Millicent, he had read, with a good deal of Wrexham's other work, a month or so ago. He was not conscious of any feeling of nervousness; the determination to carry the thing through was too strong for that. He would get up and talk for a half-hour about something—no matter what—if he died for it. Still, it would be desirable to get within speaking distance of the subject, if he could only remember.

Then, suddenly, the whole thing came back to him. The entire argument now arranged itself in his thoughts; he remembered the points the writer had made, and even a few phrases, clever turns of expression. Then, without conscious effort on his part, his mind automatically gave him, whole and ready for use, like a slot machine, a little story that was just the thing with which to begin.

As for stories, Brown had evidently been telling one himself. Ranville had a vague recollection of hearing prolonged laughter a moment before; and now, with his own speech partly formulated in his mind, his ears began once more to exercise their due function, and he caught what Brown was saying.

“. . . Even to mention his name before this cultivated audience would be in the nature of an offense. Paul Wrexham's poetry is, I know, very familiar to you all, and I shall not say a word about it. Besides, I think there is something much more important to be said about a man than in regard to what he writes, and that is in regard to what he does—what he is. So, in exercising the rare privilege tonight of presenting my friend to this gathering, I commend him to you not as a poet, not as an essayist nor an author, but as an honest man, a loyal friend, a kindly gentleman, and one of

the best fellows it has ever been my good fortune to know.”

Henry became conscious, amid a storm of applause, that Brown was bowing to him. He rose and stood beside the table, looking quite calmly out into the house, and the storm grew into a mighty roar.

Afterward, Ranville stood beside Millicent near the front of the fast-emptying house. “Then isn't he coming around at all?” she asked.

“I'm afraid not,” said Ranville gravely. “He seemed—really all played out, and Brown insisted on his going right home. I just left them in the dressing-room.”

Millicent pouted. She had been counting on the opportunity of personally conducting the great man about, after the lecture, among the young ladies of the Literary Club. “It's too bad,” she said regretfully. “But, you know, I thought he didn't seem exactly like himself tonight. His voice didn't sound natural a bit. But wasn't his lecture *splendid*? I had no idea he could speak so well!”

III

A DAY or two later Hemenway Brown stood in the clubhouse doorway, looking thoughtfully about him; and seeing how thronged the big room already was, he was doubtful as to the desirability of augmenting the jam further by the introduction of his own person. It was Saturday and the first day of the year, and on that day, by the law of long custom, comes the annual reception of the Ware River Club.

Now, the annual reception, beginning quite formally with handshaking and pleasant greetings, and ending, through eggnog and abundant good feeling, very informally with a dance, is an event which no wise member would ever think of missing. So, quite early in the afternoon this year the rooms had become crowded, and a large number of the younger people

had overflowed into the porch, which canvas sheets had nicely weathered in for the occasion. Here, the day being fair and mild, were the tables duly set, buffet-wise; and here, in a far end, the orchestra was softly tuning up for the dance which, though never announced, no one failed to count in among the afternoon's anticipations.

Inside, in the great living-room, the crowd had grown in time so thick that it seemed impossible to beat one's way through it. None the less, there were energetic people here and there who were dauntlessly attempting it. Far down the room Brown caught a glimpse of a tall girl in a black velvet suit who was making determined progress; and the lively scene before him instantly faded from his thoughts, when he saw, as she half turned to meet a friend's greeting, that it was Millicent Page.

Through thick and thin, Brown had known Millicent from their cradles; but in all their lives his feeling for her had never been so little kindly as at this moment. Her recent behavior, as he judged it, had sorely strained the bonds of even their ancient friendship. That she had reared a pedestal in her fancy for a man like Wrexham, with a perverseness too blind to appraise him as against the true worth of another, showed her at last, in Brown's belief, a girl of vain and trifling character. Plainly she was not worth the risk that Ranville had, with such cheerful courage, run for her; not worthy to be even a passive sharer in his complete and splendid success. Since the night of the lecture Brown's heart had warmed to Ranville as to a brother; and he thought it a matter of pity and deep regret that the pearl of so fine a devotion should lie at the feet of one natively unable to prize it or even to know it.

And now, through the crowded room, she was working so steadily in his direction that he finally became aware that she was making for him. A moment later she had squeezed through the last tier of intervening people and stood before him, the smile on her lips quite

counteracted by the look from her wistful, rather appealing eyes.

"Did you ever see such a horrible jam?" she asked a little eagerly.

To Brown she had never been lovelier than then; but he noted, with silent wonder, the wanness of her cheek and the faint shadows that lightly underlay her eyes. The indefinable touch of something in her face made his heart soften toward her; but, remembering Ranville, he hardened it with a jerk.

"Oh," he answered carelessly, "you can hardly expect anything but a jam on a New Year's."

"But this is the worst New Year I think I ever saw. It—makes it so frightfully hot in here, doesn't it?"

"Awfully."

"And as for—for finding anybody, it's worse than a needle in a haystack." She paused almost imperceptibly. "Have you—have you happened to see—Henry Ranville anywhere about?"

For the first time an expression of interest slipped into Brown's face. "Ranville!" he echoed, a little surprised. "Or—do you mean—?"

"I mean—him," she said constrainedly. And then, with a quick rush of feeling, she cried impulsively: "Oh, Hemenway, you needn't talk to me like this. I know everything."

Brown, astonished, regarded her. But not for anything would he betray the promise he had given Henry that night in the little dressing-room, when the last lingering applause for Wrexham still floated in vicarious commendation on the air.

"You know everything!" he exclaimed. "Why, please explain what you are talking about."

"Oh, you know. About the lecture and—Mr. Wrexham, and Henry's giving it. I—I noticed at the time that the voice—sounded different. And then—that night, I asked Henry to take Miss Gair home—and I saw you and Mr. Wrexham just getting into the carriage. Of course I saw that—he couldn't have given the lecture. And the whole thing came to me all at once like instinct. It's true, isn't it?"

And I haven't seen Henry since to—to thank him."

Brown looked silently at her a moment; and then, the stop being thus taken from his lips, he saw that common fairness to Ranville demanded that he should no longer hide the truth.

"It's true, Millicent. It was Ranville who gave the lecture, when Wrexham was too drunk to. There's not another fellow in town who could have carried it through, either. It was a fine thing to do, and, of course, he did it only for you. And how you could for one minute prefer that Wrexham—"

"How *dare* you, Hemenway!" She raised her eyes then to his, and he saw that they were blazing; but she could not stay the light tremble of her lip.

So in a flash Brown understood; and he was sorry for her now. "Forgive me, Millie. I'm a brute."

She rested her chin upon her muff and looked out unseeingly over the crowded room.

"Oh, don't you suppose I see what a little fool I've been, Hemenway! I—I thought there was nobody in town who was clever or who ever thought about—things—just because they never thought of writing them down. And Mr. Wrexham—why, in looking back, I can see now, so plainly, that he wasn't even a gentleman."

"Well, scarcely," said Brown, with a certain grim satisfaction.

"And—as well as I know Henry, just because he never talked about things like that, I never had the sense to see that he had it all in him. Oh, I've been the silliest little thing in town. Wasn't his lecture *splendid*?"

"Fine; but—I know he'd want you

to know that he got it from a magazine article of that chap's—"

"He told you that! Nothing of the sort. It was nearly all his own. I remember that article well."

Brown whistled softly. "Well, upon my word, if that's the case, it was just about the neatest little performance I ever heard."

"It was just—splendid. But as you said that night, and of course I see now, it isn't what a man says or writes that really counts, but what he is and what he does. You never once said he was Wrexham, did you? Oh, I liked your speech so much—too, Hemenway. And so that you may know that I've put all that folly behind me, I want to tell you that I agree with every word you said about Henry, and I think, too, that he's—"

She broke off suddenly, because something at that moment welled up in her throat and choked her intolerably. Her heart was all at once beating furiously, which Brown, of course, had no means of knowing; but glancing up in surprise it was given him to see the flush that swiftly flooded the pallor of her cheek. Following the direction which her gaze had instantly forsaken, he saw nothing more terrifying than the big, familiar figure of a man working toward them through the throng—a big, blond-headed, large-hearted, kind-faced man whom he, for one, admired highly.

Brown's instinct was as swift as a woman's. He waved a sudden salute to a wholly imaginary friend on the other side of the room.

"Well—I'm afraid I must run along, Millicent. There's a man over there I promised to— Why, hello! here's Ranville now."



AMOUNTS TO THE SAME

STOCKSON BONDS—So Margins told you he lost all he had?

KERB ROKER—No, he told me you had all he lost!

THE WEAPONS OF A GENTLEMAN

By Frederick Trevor Hill

THE night bell had rung three times without eliciting any response from the back room of Ferris's drug-store where Mr. Jared Hunker, the night clerk, sat engrossed in literary labor. The fourth summons, however, was so prolonged and insistent that Mr. Hunker laid aside his pencil, and, without removing his eyes from his manuscript, groped for the speaking-tube, whistled through it interrogatively and then lifted it to his ear. The reply which reached him was the one word, "Poison."

Startling as this message was it did not arouse Mr. Hunker to any immediate activity. Indeed, his "All right!" muttered in response, was impatient rather than reassuring, and having uttered it he continued his reading, merely pulling out the table drawer and tipping back his chair to accommodate the movement.

At last he reluctantly placed his manuscript inside the drawer, closed and locked it, and put the key in his pocket. Then for some seconds he remained staring dreamily at the blank wall before he roused himself sufficiently to look at his watch.

It was three o'clock in the morning, and Mr. Hunker frowned as he rose from his chair and, picking up a soiled collar from the floor, proceeded to adjust it before a large mirror hanging against the opposite wall. The clean-shaven face reflected in the glass was small, pale and sickly, and its youthful features were painfully insignificant, but Jared Hunker viewed himself with evident complacency. Even after his toilet was completed he remained staring in the mirror, medita-

tively stroking back the long, light yellow hair which poured over his head and down his neck like a sticky stream, slightly overflowing at the collar, and continued lost in self-contemplative delight until the night bell again set up a frantic ringing.

The jangling noise made every fine-strung nerve in Jared's little body tingle. He hated the drug-store, its every association and surrounding, despised its petty trading and its mean commercial spirit. His soul, winged with artistic aspirations, beat against the walls of his environment or exhausted with vain strivings moped in idolatrous introspection, tenderly nursing its bruised pinions. From ten o'clock at night till seven in the morning he lived in a world of his own making, transcribing inspirations which should one day make him famous, and fiercely resenting every interruption which recalled him to the contemptible reality of the shop. But though the night-bell clashed against his thoughts with hideous discord it could not at once transport him from his dreamland, and even when he donned a dressing-gown of India shawl pattern and strode with miniature dignity toward the door he was still treading the courts of fancy draped in the magic hero-making mantle of unconquerable self-belief.

The shop was dark by comparison with the back room, and Mr. Hunker guided himself across the tiled floor by the pin points of gas behind the big colored bottles which diffused a blurred glow of red and yellow against the plate-glass shop front. Outside the sky was black and the show

windows merely mirrored a faint reflection of their own display, but through the glass door Mr. Hunker could distinguish a white face peering closely into the shop and the tall figure of a man leaning heavily against the panel. The appearance of the visitor, his message and the hour might well have combined to alarm a timid person, but Jared Hunker displayed neither nervousness nor interest. He calmly walked to the gas-jet screened by the red bottle, turned it up and unlocking the door opened it so suddenly that the customer pitched forward into the room.

"Poison!" he gasped as he lurched toward the nearest chair, and then as he sank into it he repeated the word in a weary, almost confidential, whisper.

Mr. Hunker turned to the gas-jet without glancing at the speaker, carefully lowered it again, and locking the door mechanically tried the handle.

"What sort of poison?" he inquired over his shoulder—his voice sounding far away, as though he were thinking of something else.

"Any kind!"

"Any kind?"

The night clerk repeated the words with a puzzled, absent-minded inflection and turned toward the customer with his first indication of interest.

"A peculiar case," he observed reflectively, "requiring a universal antidote."

The man in the chair made no reply and Jared moved over to the counter and leaned against it, languidly studying the strange intruder.

"I see," he continued meditatively after a pause. "You haven't taken poison—you want to buy it. For rats, perhaps?"

"For a rat baited by fortune and trapped by fate!"

"Ah!"

Mr. Hunker reflectively smoothed back his yellow hair as he uttered the monosyllable and his head nodded approvingly.

"'Baited by fortune and trapped by fate,'" he quoted dreamily as though

speaking to himself. "Good—very good—excellent. I might have said 'baited by fame' myself, but the other was well turned and doubtless fits the case. So you want to die?" he continued, directly addressing the stranger in the chair.

"You've guessed it, good drug-man. But don't stand there muttering in your sleep about it! Get me something. Anything quick and sure will do."

Mr. Hunker drew himself to his full height, and wrapping his dressing-gown tightly about his body, glared angrily at the speaker, who threw a leg over the arm of his chair and turned away unmindful of any offense.

"Good drug-man!" Mr. Hunker's eyes blazed resentment at the figure in the chair. Who was this impudent fellow who presumed to patronize him? It was preposterous enough that he should have been interrupted in work which would some day liberate him and force the recognition of the world of letters and the world at large. But to be insulted by an insolent night prowler was intolerable. He should not escape chastisement. "Good drug-man," indeed! The irritating words infuriated the night clerk as he glowered at his impulsive victim. How could he best enforce a much needed lesson and avenge his dignity? Physically he was no match for the offender. But even if he could bodily eject him the result would be unsatisfactory. The fellow had a mind—his phrase about fortune and fate showed that. He must be mentally humbled and made to regret his attempted superiority. He must learn what manner of man he had presumed to patronize. . . .

Mr. Hunker opened his lips to speak, but paused instinctively and continued his scrutiny of the visitor. The man was young—scarcely older than Jared himself; his haggard face was handsome despite the disfiguring marks of dissipation, and his general appearance was still refined and gentle. He was carelessly dressed—almost shabbily; but there was something in the very

recklessness of his attitude which reinforced his tone of superiority and supported it—something which dominated the little night clerk and made him hesitate with a withering sense of inferiority.

“Well?”

The visitor turned impatiently toward the shopman, but his glance of imperious inquiry changed to a smile of puzzled amusement as he noted Mr. Hunker’s studied expression of lofty dignity.

“Well?” he repeated sharply. “What are we waiting for?”

It was now or never, and yet the right word would not come to Jared’s tongue. In another moment the opportunity for crushing this insolent intruder would be gone. He inwardly prayed for inspiration, and as he did so an idea gradually began to shape itself in his mind.

“Are you a physician or a chemist?” he inquired, raising his colorless eyebrows.

The young man stared blankly at his questioner.

“Am I a physician or a chemist?” he repeated wonderingly. “No. If I were I might be content to live.”

The answer ended in a mirthless laugh.

“Why do you wish to die?”

“Because”—the speaker paused and laughed bitterly to himself—“why, because I want to do something great,” he went on mockingly, “and it is great to do that which shackles accident and bolts up change. No less a man than Shakespeare compounded that prescription for immortality—good druggeman.”

Mr. Hunker winced, but he checked the oath which rose to his lips.

“Why do you want to die?” he repeated haughtily.

The customer looked at his questioner frowningly.

“Isn’t my reason good enough?” he demanded. “No, of course it isn’t,” he continued. “You’re a druggist—not a dreamer—and you’re entitled to an answer you can comprehend. I want to die because I cannot sleep,

and nothing appeals to me so much as the sleep which knows no waking. Hand out the magic balm, kind Esculapius.”

Mr. Hunker folded his dressing-gown more tightly about him, as though preparing for a spring.

“There is a certain risk in complying with your orders for both of us,” he observed, with deadly calmness, “for you as well as me.”

“Risk?” laughed the young man. “What risk can there be for me? The perchance of dreams? I’ll stake my hazard on the die—and dead folks tell no tales, good drug-man.”

“Then help yourself.” Mr. Hunker blazed the words over his shoulder as he turned on his heel. “The shelves are full of poison and—and other things,” he added meaningly.

The customer swung himself about in his chair.

“Hold on!” he protested, rising. “This won’t do, you know. I can’t tell one drug from another, and I might take a slow poison instead of a quick one, or—”

“You might draw an emetic. Quite so. Well, nothing venture, nothing win. Wait on yourself, my supercilious wreck, and good Morrow—or good-bye.”

The door closed with a triumphant bang, leaving the customer staring hopelessly at the crowded shelves. For some moments he remained standing in the same position. Then he slowly crossed the shop, passed behind the counter and began an examination of the jars and bottles, peering closely at the abbreviated Latin names. Now and again he took down a bottle, removed the stopper and sniffed at the contents; but the labels were confusing or wholly inscrutable, and he hesitated to put his conclusions to the test. A mistake entailed ludicrous possibilities, too humiliating to admit of risk. There was nothing dignified in a cramp—something laughable about a stomach-pump. Even if he recognized laudanum or some grateful sleeping draught, he might render it ineffective by taking the wrong quantity, and the next

dose he tried might prove an antidote or an emetic. The situation was comic—ridiculously impossible, and the would-be suicide accepted it with a sobering laugh as he stood staring at the bottle-filled shelves. He had placed himself in an absurd position—so absurd that a conceited, underbred clerk had taken advantage of it and made him recognize his own folly. By Jove, he had underestimated the little druggist! Worse—he had wantonly insulted him. To plan suicide was a foolish weakness, but to act like a snobbish cad was crime in a gentleman. He must have been drinking pretty heavily to have so far forgotten himself. There had been a delicious humor in the little chap's handling of the situation and a really masterful recognition of climacteric values. He was entitled to instant and complete reparation for the contemptible treatment he had received, and he should have it before the offender lost all touch with humor and good-breeding.

The young man turned impulsively to the rear of the shop, knocked at the door, through which the night clerk had made his triumphant exit, and, receiving an inarticulate answer, turned the handle and passed into the back room.

Mr. Hunker sat at his table, a green-shaded student-lamp beside his elbow, his pencil moving rapidly over a yellow pad and his attitude indicating complete preoccupation. The visitor entered quietly, and, taking a chair near the prescription-table at the other side of the room, sat down and silently watched the worker. For some moments there was no sound save the purr of pencil on paper, and then the night clerk paused, pushed back his chair and slowly turned to the intruder.

"Aren't you dead yet?" he inquired disdainfully.

"Not yet," was the smiling answer. "I've come to tell you that you've scored and scored neatly. You're a better man than I am, Gunga Dhin, and that's not much of a compliment, either. It was keen of you to give me

the freedom of your poison-arsenal, and though I'm not overfond of life, I'm glad I've lived long enough to tell you so."

The visitor rose and held out his hand. But Mr. Hunker merely tipped back his chair and nodded.

"I didn't suppose you'd come to much harm," he observed coolly. "There's a special Providence which looks after your sort."

"After drunkards, you mean? Yes, I know. But it wasn't that. I was just afraid to take chances."

"Tail end of a spree, I suppose?"

"No. I tried to get dead drunk—that's all."

"What for?"

"To find rest. I haven't slept for a week. But the rum merely muddled and weakened me as the sleeping-powders did. I'm achingly wide-awake now, but quite sober. I don't know why I'm wasting your time telling you all this," he broke off suddenly. "I merely wanted to let you know how well you'd scored. Good night."

The speaker moved unsteadily toward the door.

"What's the matter with you?"

Mr. Hunker growled out the words perfunctorily, but the visitor paused.

"Oh, nothing. Nerves—overwork, I suppose," he answered.

"Overwork, eh? What sort of work?"

"Critical."

"Critical?" Mr. Hunker swung his chair toward the door and gazed with astonishment at the sick man swaying against it. "What kind of a critic are you?" he demanded.

"A mere literary hack. Now you know why I've so little use for life."

The young man smiled faintly as he steadied himself with a hand on the door-knob.

"On the contrary, I consider your profession most—most interesting." There was an unconscious note of deference in Mr. Hunker's tone. "You see, I do a little in that line myself," he continued.

"What! You a critic and live in a perfect treasury of relief?"

The visitor pointed toward the shop and laughed incredulously.

"I am not a critic," Mr. Hunker responded stiffly. "But I am of the craft, sir—claiming the creative side of the profession."

The young man caught himself smiling at the pompous speech, and instantly repressed an inclination to laugh.

"You write?" he inquired gravely.

"A little—occasionally."

"I sympathize with you. Once upon a time I wrote myself. You contribute to the magazines, I suppose?"

"Sometimes. Won't you sit down, sir?"

The critic lurched toward the nearest chair, vaguely noting the deferential tone, and Mr. Hunker, complacently smoothing back his yellow hair, settled down to sun himself in the companionship of a man who stood, as it were, within the portals of fame.

"With what periodical are you associated?" he inquired fraternally.

"I'm one of Copperthwait's people," was the weary answer.

"An excellent magazine, sir—most excellent. I—er—" The critic noted the hungry look in his host's face and strove to rise to the occasion.

"You ought to send us something," he ventured.

Mr. Hunker beamed.

"You see, I have so little time," he began, and then paused in sheer embarrassment.

"You do most of your writing at night—like this?" the critic indicated the table and its papers.

"I do my creative work between twelve and three; my polishing between three and six," Mr. Hunker vouchsafed confidentially.

The guest groaned in spirit, but struggled on.

"Your devotion does you credit," he commented gravely. "And I'm sure your work is good," he added weakly.

Mr. Hunker glanced eagerly at the speaker, started to say something and then paused awkwardly.

"The artist is seldom a good judge of his own creations," he began, again

striving to put indifference into his tone. "But—but I've a little something here which, if you'd like, I'll read to you," he added in a burst of desperate longing.

The critic bowed his head submissively. Had he not insulted this Philistine? Ought he not to welcome any opportunity to make the reparation of a gentleman?

"By all means, let me hear it," he assented, with a gallant effort at cordiality.

For a moment Jared Hunker could scarcely believe his ears. For years he had dreamed of the day when he would be sought by the editors and asked to give a reading from his works. Many a time he had pictured the scene to himself—even practicing a pose and rehearsing his replies against the hour when fame should find him. But he could not recall one of the phrases he had treasured for the occasion, and his pose was an awkward constraint. His hands trembled as he lifted the manuscript from his table drawer and adjusted the lamp-wick to the proper flame. Then, with a glance at his auditor, he began to read in a voice which shook with excitement at first but grew steadier as he proceeded, and in a few seconds lost all self-consciousness in the reality of the pages.

The quiet attention of the critic encouraged Mr. Hunker, but he paused perceptibly at the end of the first chapter before accepting a silent invitation to continue. Then, as he proceeded, he instinctively recognized that the effect of the second scene would be lost without the third, and he read the two as one without a glance at his impulsive auditor. Never had his words seemed so nicely chosen; never had the pages read with such smoothness—the restful quiet of the room afforded a perfect atmosphere. It was impossible to stop at the fourth chapter, and the author hurried on with only a fleeting glance at the attentive listener. The fifth chapter was, however, his most brilliant opening, and Mr. Hunker plunged into it without so much as an upward glance, fearing some interrupt-

ing question or comment, which would spoil the whole effect. But this danger behind him, another threatened and urged him on. What if it should be suspected that he could not sustain, in the final chapters, the high level he had attempted in those already heard? As long as he held the attention of his critic it was superfluous to ask permission to continue.

The reading proceeded on its even course, swelled with the climax of the story and came to a close with beads of perspiration glistening on the reader's brow.

The author laid his manuscript aside and glanced expectantly at his critical auditor; but the man neither spoke nor moved. Mr. Hunker rose and, lifting the lamp, peered into his haggard face. The critic's eyes were closed, but the sound of his breathing was plainly audible. The sufferer from insomnia had found a cure.

Mr. Hunker flushed angrily as he glared into the sleeper's worn and tired face, and his wrathful expression turned to a look of malicious hatred as he gazed. Then he swiftly tiptoed across the room, filled a syringe with ice water and deliberately squirted a stream straight between the slumberer's eyes.

The man awoke with a start, stared wildly about him for a moment, and then, with a swift glance at the syringe in Hunker's hand, brushed the dripping water from his coat and rose unsteadily from his chair.

"Your manuscript has unusual mer-

its, sir—very unusual," he observed gravely after a slight pause. "I answer for—for its acceptance if you care to send it to our place—"

"But you slept while I read it!" Jared blurted out indignantly. "Did you hear a single word?" he demanded, in a conflict of resentment and hope.

"We do not usually accept manuscripts without a hearing," answered the critic coldly. "I haven't slept for days," he went on quietly, "but if I ever do sleep again it will not be for minutes but for months, unless someone should be brutal cad enough to wake me, and I know a gentleman when I see him, even if I don't always act like one myself."

The calm, flat tone of statement was defensive.

"Your manuscript is, as I say, unusual," he continued. "You will have my cheque for it tomorrow if you send then. Here is my card. Good night!"

Mr. Hunker followed the speaker into the shop, vainly striving for an adequate reply, but he reached the entrance without uttering a word and simply bowed his visitor out.

Then he mechanically closed the door and, pressing his face against the glass panel, followed the figure retreating into the darkness with a puzzled stare. When the light of dawn streaked through the glass it found him still standing there, wondering just what was meant by "the weapons of a gentleman," and why, in his hour of triumph, he failed to feel the elation of a victor.



THE LIGHT THAT FAILED

HE seemed at first to think he was
A shining light of high renown;
She did not change her views, because
"Tis certain that she turned him down.

MADELINE BRIDGES.

L'ABSENT

Par Georges Maurevert

ET je puis maintenant parler, puisqu'ils sont morts tous deux — et que je vis moi-même à l'ombre de la mort... Il faut que je raconte, pour les âges futurs, la sublime aventure amoureuse dont je fus, pendant plus de trente ans, le confident, unique et l'ébloui témoin.

Aussi bien, cette histoire merveilleuse n'a guère chance d'être comprise que par ceux ou par celles qui sont un peu morts d'amour, ou par ces quelques rares exilés qui ont mis, avec le poète, leur foi dans les rêves comme dans les seules réalités.

De la seconde où Emmanuel d'Avranchy et Aurélie de Mauléon se rencontrèrent, ils se reconnaissent du même ciel. Ils ne s'étaient point encore parlé que déjà leurs âmes s'étaient rejoindes. Le brillant salon officiel où ils furent l'un à l'autre présentés leur parut un carrefour de l'Eden, et il leur sembla que ceux qui proféraient cérémonieusement leurs noms mortels prenaient soudain des aspects de fantômes.

La marquise Aurélie de Mauléon avait alors vingt-cinq ans. Belle d'une beauté souveraine avec sa prestance élancée de Walkyrie, le marbre impeccable de son sein, son épaisse chevelure châtain aux reflets d'or fauve, ses grands yeux calmes et cette sereine démarche de déesse qui vous faisait presque vous prosterner, elle semblait encore, vingt ans plus tard, porter l'impérial manteau des adorations qu'elle suscita. Veuve de bonne heure, elle fut, jusqu'à sa mort, la belle Mme de Mauléon, comme tout Paris la nommait.

J'étais, depuis l'enfance, l'ami d'Em-

manuel d'Avranchy. C'est l'âme la plus chevaleresque, le plus noble caractère que j'aie jamais connus! Ce fut le rejeton suprême d'une race élégante, mélancolique et batailleuse. Son vaste front blanc, ombragé de la soie blonde de ses cheveux, s'inclinait d'ordinaire sous le poids d'une tristesse natale, et un mal héréditaire et mystérieux avait précocement courbé sa haute taille. Lieutenant de vaisseau à trente ans, il avait donné sa démission pour cause de santé alors que chacun le croyait porté vers le plus haut destin.

Ignoré de tous, l'amour de ces deux êtres fut une chose magnifique et douloreuse. Je ne fus mis au courant de cette liaison que trois années plus tard — par Emmanuel d'Avranchy lui-même. Secrétaire d'ambassade à Stockholm, j'étais alors en congé à Paris. Il se présenta un matin chez moi et je le reconnus autant qu'on peut reconnaître une ombre. D'un trait, il me conta son amour, d'une voix sourde, presque inaudible, avec des inflexions lointaines d'au delà...

— Je vais mourir ces temps-ci, continua-t-il, arrêtant d'un sourire affreux toute protestation... Je le sens et je le sais. C'est une affaire de quelques semaines au plus — et c'est pourquoi je suis venu te trouver, toi, mon plus vieil et mon meilleur ami. J'ai besoin que tu me rendes un service pour lequel j'abandonnerais volontiers, si c'était possible, ma part d'éternité. Je ne veux pas mourir sous les yeux de Mme de Mauléon. Je veux, au contraire, qu'elle ignore toujours ma mort et qu'elle m'aime, sa vie durant, comme un absent!...

Et comme je le regardais avec stu-

peur, me demandant s'il possédait bien toute sa raison, il poursuivit tranquillement :

— Voici ce que j'ai décidé. Je vais aller mourir loin d'elle, dans un endroit où je serai parfaitement inconnu. Je passerai mes derniers jours à lui écrire des lettres où je ne lui parlerai que de notre amour, la seule chose au monde qui nous intéresse et auprès de laquelle rien n'existe pour nous. J'en écrirai le plus qu'il me sera permis, jusqu'au moment où la plume me tombera des doigts. Ces lettres seront adressées de pays où je serai alors censé voyager à telle date; cette date ainsi que le nom du pays où je sais pouvoir trouver un correspondant français seront inscrits, au crayon, sur l'enveloppe à la place du timbre. Je t'envverai avant de mourir toutes ces lettres en un seul paquet. Tes relations diplomatiques te permettront de demander, comme un service, à telle résidence, tel consulat, ou telle ambassade, d'affranchir et d'envoyer, à la date indiquée, ces lettres à la marquise de Mauléon, à Paris.

— Mais, objectai-je, bouleversé de sa proposition, elle répondra à ces lettres, et alors...

— Alors, tu prieras résident, consul ou ambassadeur de bien vouloir te retourner la lettre au nom d' "Emmanuel d'Auregères," nom sous lequel je dirai à Mme de Mauléon de m'écrire. Ces lettres qui te reviendront ainsi, tu les garderas ou tu les déchireras, à ton gré... Voilà le service que je voulais te demander avant de mourir... Acceptes-tu?... Refuses-tu?...

Je me jetai dans ses bras...

— Ton mensonge est si beau que j'y veut prêter les mains, autant par amitié pour toi que par admiration pour la femme que tu juges assez noble pour y croire.

— J'étais sûr de toi, me répondit-il, et Mme de Mauléon te sait mon seul ami et mon frère... Ensemble, vous parlerez de moi quand je serai... au loin...

La disparition soudaine du comte d'Avranchy ne fit aucun bruit. Il n'avait point de parents, n'était lié avec quiconque et ne connaissait, pour

ainsi dire, personne à Paris. D'ailleurs, j'insinuai dans le monde le bruit d'une exploration des bords de l'Amazone... et dame! les dangers sont si grands...

Il vécut près de trois mois à T..., petit port de la Catalogne, rédigeant fiévreusement la correspondance d'amour que je reçus sous forme de cent vingt-deux lettres, cachetées à ses armes, dans les derniers jours de juin 1866. Je compris que sa fin était prochaine.

Ce fut Mme de Mauléon qui m'apprit le trépas d'Emmanuel, en m'écrivant qu'elle venait de recevoir une longue lettre de lui, dans laquelle il la priaît de faire réponse à M. d'Auregères, aux bons soins du consulat français de Cadix. Nous avions convenu avec Emmanuel que ce changement d'adresse serait pour moi le "faire part" de sa mort. D'ailleurs, il annonçait dans sa lettre que c'était la première étape de "son grand voyage."

Je sus plus tard, par une enquête discrète que je menai sur place, qu'un inconnu, un Français nommé Emmanuel — nom sous lequel il lui était parfois adressé des lettres aussitôt brûlées que reçues — était mort à T... le 2 juillet de cette année, et qu'on l'avait enterré le lendemain, dans le petit cimetière de cette localité. J'allai, un soir lourd d'automne, le cœur crevant de sanglots, flétrir pieusement le genou devant l'humble tombe de "l'inconnu" — et ce fut tout, suivant son ordre.

Au reçu de sa lettre, j'annonçai ma visite à Mme de Mauléon. Je ne sais comment, au cours de cette première entrevue *post mortem*, j'eus la force de refouler mes larmes, de cacher ma douleur, de ne pas lui crier la vérité en lui donnant, d'un coup, tout ce brûlant paquet de lettres d'amour qu'il me fallait, pendant de longues années, lui envoyer une à une!...

Peut-être fut-ce l'attitude étrange, singulièrement réservée de cette admirable femme!... Oui, il me sembla qu'elle voulait éviter toute allusion, même lointaine, à la gravité de l'affection dont Emmanuel était atteint, à son décès possible... "Je sais qu'il m'aime, me disait-elle; je n'ai pas

besoin de savoir autre chose. De près comme de loin, je suis à lui comme il est à moi. Je n'ai qu'à fermer les yeux pour sentir sur mes paupières le frémissement de ses lèvres, et je n'ai qu'à écouter le silence pour entendre sa voix..."

Ella ajouta, lentement, me fixant de son beau regard violet—et le cœur me sautait dans la poitrine à ces paroles inouïes:

— Vous me diriez qu'Emmanuel est mort que je ne vous croirais pas. Je ne le croirai que le jour où *lui-même me le fera savoir...*

Elle me parla de la lettre qu'elle venait de recevoir. C'était si beau, assurait-elle, que les strophes les plus enflammées des plus grands poètes paraissaient à côté sans éclat. Elle ne pouvait plus lire autre chose; tout lui semblait, à présent, terne, banal, ennuyeux... C'était un cantique de passion, auguste et radieux, tendre et violent. On y trouvait toutes les caresses et tous les serments, toutes les joies et toutes les détresses, toutes les adorations et tous les spasmes, tous les pleurs et tous les sourires!...

Je l'écoutais, interdit, angoissé, cherchant à démêler sa vraie pensée dans ses paroles. Elle n'eut ni un geste ni un mot m'aïdant à percer la troublante énigme.

— Venez me voir, mon ami, le plus souvent que vous le pourrez, je vous en prie—me dit-elle comme je prenais congé. C'est le vœu d'Emmanuel et c'est le mien. Il me fait savoir dans sa lettre que, vu l'état de sa santé, tout travail intellectuel lui étant à peu près défendu, il ne pourra m'écrire que tous les trois ou quatre mois... Venez, votre présence me sera encore un peu de lui-même...

Je m'inclinai vers ses mains pâles, la remerciant.

Et la prestigieuse aventure se poursuivit, des années et des années. Trois ou quatre fois l'an, je faisais religieusement parvenir une des lettres à Mme de Mauléon, selon le mode imaginé par Emmanuel... Et j'allais la voir aussi souvent que me le permettait ma situation diplomatique.

Je reconnaissais chaque fois, au bonheur irradiant de tout son être, à sa transfiguration merveilleuse, que le courrier lui avait apporté la chère missive...

Emmanuel avait, pendant ses quinze années de marine, visité tous les pays du monde—et il promenait maintenant la bien-aimée, par l'idée, devant les plus beaux paysages de la terre.

Il disait la douceur et le tragique des cieux et des mers, les floraisons inconnues et les astres nouveaux... Les chants des matelots se mêlaient au clapotis des flots changeants, à l'odeur des brises, à l'ombre des nuages porteurs de foudre... Il disait les villes étincelantes et les civilisations mortes; les couchers de soleil sur les monts et sur les océans, et les aubes dans les golfs et sur les fleuves. Il disait la plainte du vent dans les ruines et le cri des courlis sur les grèves...

Et il disait aussi son amour, son amour, son amour!... Tout lui était sujet et prétexte d'en parler, les fleurs, les brises, les cieux, les mers et les soleils...

J'expédiai la cent vingt-deuxième et dernière lettre il y à environ cinq ans. Quelques semaines plus tard, étant alors en mission extraordinaire dans un royaume de l'est, je fus soudainement appelé à Paris par un pressant télégramme de Mme de Mauléon. De sinistres pressentiments me firent faire diligence. En arrivant à Paris, je passai chez moi changer mes vêtements tout poussiéreux du voyage.

Une surprise m'y attendait...

Comme je décachetais rapidement la correspondance arrivée les derniers jours, d'une double enveloppe s'échappèrent des feuilles de papier blanc, sans aucune écriture... J'avais, dans ma précipitation, décacheté par mégarde la dernière des réponses faites par Mme de Mauléon à Emmanuel "d'Au-regrès," et que le consulat de S..., en Océanie, venait de me retourner.

Une sourde prescience me fit briser, fébrilement, les cachets des autres réponses, précieusement gardées... Toutes les enveloppes, la première comme la dernière, ne contenaient que du papier blanc!...

Mme de Mauléon avait donc deviné la vérité dès le premier jour!... Vivant en esprit avec son cher absent, elle n'avait point eu besoin de l'artifice épistolaire pour faire sa partie dans le plus beau roman d'amour qu'il fût peut-être donné à deux mortels de réaliser!... Je comprenais maintenant que si elle avait *semblé* répondre à Emmanuel, c'était, simplement, à cause de moi qu'une négligence eût sans doute étonné, et pour favoriser jusqu'à la fin le mensonge splendide dont j'étais le nécessaire complice.

Je sautai dans une voiture qui me conduisit, brides abattues, à l'hôtel de Mme de Mauléon... Trop tard!... Des domestiques aux yeux rougis me

précédèrent dans la chambre où la marquise — n'ayant plus rien, désormais, à attendre de la terre — reposait du dernier sommeil... Un sourire divin illuminait sa face extasiée... Je m'écroutai auprès du lit, mes pleurs ruisselant sur ses doigts glacés...

... A la nuit, je sortis de l'hôtel.

Une nappe de nuées noires houlait dans le ciel, piqué seulement vers le zénith d'une scintillante lueur jaune. Il me sembla que la nature elle-même s'endeuillait, et que les cieux chargeaient leurs tentures funèbres des armoiries séculaires des comtes d'Avranchy: *De sable, à l'étoile d'or, en abîme.*



FULFILMENT

THERE was a question in the one pure star
 That trembled on the West,
 Where primrose sunsets pale and deepen far
 Beyond the high snow-crest;
 A haunting question in the folds of mist
 Dropped low from fir and pine,
 Down where the valley's slopes of amethyst
 Through purpling shadows shine;
 A question, from the tawny bench-land's rim
 To that far snow-crowned brow;
 O my heart's Answer! through the twilight dim
 There comes no question now.

There was a sobbing in the wind that swept
 The pine-grown mountain side;
 A heartache as of one who begged and wept
 And would not be denied.
 A sobbing in the water, lapping low
 The brook-side rocks and sand;
 A restless, ceaseless tossing to and fro
 Of boughs on either hand;
 A nameless hunger vexing all the place
 Of cliffs and stream and shore;
 O my heart's Fulness! since I have your face
 I shall not hunger more!

MABEL EARLE.

DOROTHEA'S AUNT JANE

By Ruth Kimball Gardiner

CONVENTION has neglected to appoint a day on which youth must be definitely doffed, and middle age as definitely assumed, as straw hats are retired on the fifteenth of September, and felts brought out. The omission gives life to the masseuse and to the Woman's Page, but exposes us all to the humiliation of waking up suddenly some day in November, and perceiving ourselves utterly ridiculous in our faded straw hats. One could accept middle age with dignity, if one but knew exactly when to do it. If it were agreed that the first gray hair, now, meant that youth was gone—but the first gray hair is no more than a stray crimson leaf in August. It is a mere accident. Furthermore, one may be grizzled at twenty-five, and another raven-tressed at five-and-forty, while a third smiles on sixty years under Titian locks that were brown at thirty. The first gray hair conveys no hint whatever.

Mrs. Torrington was twenty-eight when she found hers. It made her feel like a child in her grandmother's bonnet, for she was, and had always been, absurdly young. Even when the white hair had been multiplied tenfold, she regarded the matter as unimportant. She had been precocious as a child, and admired for it. She was merely being precocious now. She had been married at seventeen to her father's partner. For five years she was accustomed to be mistaken for the daughter of her husband. Widowhood made her younger than is normal at twenty-two. Her marriage had been one without the slightest tinge of romance. The late Mr. Torrington was

a dyspeptic first and a man afterward. His claim to amiability might be classed with that of an Indian to goodness. However, he preserved for his widow her youth by sparing her a lasting grief.

At twenty-eight, Mrs. Torrington was absolutely young. Only her enemies spoke of her as still young. She was short of stature, and her face had been cast in a girlish mold. She had no child for the world to date her by, elderly men still admired her, and tradesmen invariably called her "Miss." She had always been well-groomed. If the masseuse visited her now, it was merely because massage had become a part of the grooming process of every woman. If creams and lotions multiplied on her dressing-table, they expressed simply the advance of the chemist's art. Mrs. Torrington reveled in the undisturbed possession of her youth till she was thirty-three.

Then two startling things happened. Her hair-dresser suggested a tonic—purely vegetable, merely to restore the original tint—and Dorothea announced her return from Paris. It is immaterial who the hair-dresser was, but Dorothea was the late Mr. Torrington's niece. She had been graduated from a woman's college *summa cum laude*, and she had gone abroad for post-graduate work in her favorite subject, which was sociology. She was an athlete, and she gloried in her physique in much the same way that Mrs. Torrington took pride in a figure. Dorothea wore all her garments suspended from her shoulders, and had views.

Mrs. Torrington had always trembled before her. Dorothea was the only person on earth who remembered her baptismal name. To all her friends Mrs. Torrington was Tina. Dorothea called her Aunt Jane. It had been amusing from Dorothea at nine, to Tina at seventeen. It was vaguely annoying when Dorothea was twenty. Tina felt that it would be crushing from Dorothea at five-and-twenty. Nobody could be Aunt Jane to a sociologist and be anything else than elderly.

During Dorothea's years abroad it had been generally understood that Tina meant to bring her out when she came home.

"Fancy you with a grown-up niece!" people used to say.

Whenever she forgot what Dorothea was, Tina enjoyed the saying. As a chaperon she would be piquantly young against a background of middle-aged mothers. When she remembered what Dorothea was her blood ran cold. Dorothea was not a girl one could bring out. On the contrary, she would bring Tina in, and put her in her proper place as Aunt Jane. Her letters left no room for doubt. Mrs. Torrington grew positively morbid on the subject. She had hesitated to confess to herself that she was thirty-three. Now, she clung desperately to thirty-three. It was so young compared to the at least fifty-six Dorothea's Aunt Jane would be obliged to be.

Dorothea's last letter from Paris was not pleasant reading. She wrote:

Saw Baer Mitchell at the Van Arsdales. He is as gray as a badger. He asked after you, and if you were as young as ever. Asked me why I didn't dance, and said you used to be keen on dancing in your day. He is coming home about the time I sail. He seems to have no definite purpose in life, but—

Tina did not read beyond the "but." For the first time her "day" had been referred to as a thing of the past, and by that little wretch, Baer Mitchell! Baer had been a page at her wedding, and had informed her later that the ceremony cut him to the quick.

"I don't want anything to happen to

Mr. Torrington," he said, "but I can always hope."

He had written her a formal proposal in the first month of her widowhood.

You'll have to wait some time, but I am going to be true as steel. I'd like for you to tell me would you want me to be a cowboy, because father says I have to go to college, which is useless for a cowboy.

Tina pronounced against the cowboy scheme, and kissed Master Baer good-bye when he went away to preparatory school. She had not seen him since then, and had discouraged his efforts at keeping up a correspondence. Now he was coming home from his *Wanderjahr*. He must be twenty-six, and he was gray. No one can cling to the fiction of youth when the page at one's wedding has come to six-and-twenty years. Tina felt that what Dorothea could not do, Baer would. Together they would make her Aunt Jane in spite of herself.

Flight seemed the only refuge. Dorothea had expressed a determination to live in a college settlement, or to have a college settlement live with her, Tina was not quite sure which. At any rate, Dorothea was capable of taking care of herself. Tina gladly left the house to her, and ran away. It was February, and all right-minded people were going South, anyway. Tina coughed twice for her physician, and telegraphed her agent in Bienville to put her cottage in readiness. She was not in a mood for the Florida east coast. People there might wonder what had become of Dorothea. Bienville was on the Gulf coast. The late Mr. Torrington had selected it because it was a quiet place, and, the water being remarkably unpalatable, he was certain it must be good for the health.

Tina's letter awaited Dorothea on her arrival. The next post carried her answer. She wrote:

I'm glad you're in a real Southern town, not one of the show places. I have been wanting to study the race question. Expect me next week. I'm bringing Baer Mitchell with me. Hope you can put him up.

Tina recognized that it was useless to struggle against Aunt Janedom

any longer, but in the midst of her despair a comforting thought came to her. Dorothea held advanced views on the Mission of Woman. She understood scientific child-culture, and considered it the duty of every college woman to marry.

"Eureka!" said Tina to herself. "She shall marry Baer Mitchell."

Bienville was just the place for the making of such a match. Dorothea could not escape Baer if she would, and if Baer had wanted to escape Dorothea he would not have been trailing after her. With Dorothea married, the ghost of Aunt Jane would be laid forever. Dorothea might call her Aunt Jane when they met. She could not live with her and force her to be Aunt Jane. Tina laid her plans.

To begin with, she sent the station wagon to meet Dorothea and Baer, and stayed at home herself. First impressions of Bienville, undisturbed by a third person, would form an initial bond. She hoped that Paris had influenced Dorothea to wear her clothes, instead of suspending them, but a first glance at Dorothea as the hall door opened to admit her showed that Paris had failed. There was in the girl's attire merely a difference without distinction. London had tailored Dorothea. Tina went forward to meet her bravely. Dorothea kissed her.

"Well, Aunt Jane!" she said.

Baer stepped forward out of the shadow. The height of him and the gray hair amazed Tina.

"Tina!" he cried, seizing both her hands. "Tina, you little wonder!"

Tina felt in him an ally against Dorothea and Aunt Jane. At the same time, she hoped her manner was sufficiently dampening to put him in his proper place. She was not yet old enough to flirt with a mere boy. Besides, he was to marry Dorothea, and the sooner the better.

"Don't be silly," she said sternly.

"That's just the way you used to say it," he laughed. "You haven't changed a bit."

"I've grown ten years older," she reminded him.

"I know it. So have I."

Clearly, the conversation was not leading in the right direction. Tina pretended to detect signs of fatigue in Dorothea. She must go to bed at once. Tina made the suggestion tentatively, fearfully. If she could assert her authority over Dorothea, perhaps Aunt Janedom might be fought off a little longer.

"Very well," said Dorothea. "I do feel a bit done up, Aunt Jane."

It was, as one may say, a draw. Dorothea had yielded, but she had asserted the Aunt Jane.

Next morning, Dorothea's sway began. She moved the breakfast-time an hour earlier. Tina protested weakly that in Bienville one took coffee and a roll early, and breakfasted when one chose. "Just as they do in Paris," she explained.

"I never did it in Paris," said Dorothea. "I don't approve of it at all. Coffee in the morning is bad for anyone, and one needs a hearty breakfast at a regular hour."

Tina breakfasted thereafter at half-past seven, and became more determined than ever to marry Dorothea to Baer. She opened her campaign after the first breakfast.

"I want you and Baer to go for the mail," she announced.

Dorothea acquiesced. "I suppose you'll want me to do the marketing, too," she said. "Does your cook make out a list every day of what is wanted, or do you do the marketing twice a week yourself?"

"I don't know," said Tina. "I don't believe she can write. I think she orders things from the boy that comes around. Of course," she added hastily, "I often tell her what I want."

Dorothea's face expressed disapproval.

"It's time somebody took hold, if that's the way you do," she said. "I'll go and interview cook now."

Tina, a little blankly, watched her disappear. Then she turned to Baer determinedly.

"Dorothea is so systematic," she

said. "She really has remarkable executive ability."

"Tina," asked Baer, "is that powder, or is your hair really gray?"

"It's not powder," Tina answered. "It's age."

Baer touched the soft waves gently.

"It's no end becoming," he said.

Tina stepped out on the gallery and stood resolutely in the full glare of the sun.

"We have a charming view, I think," she said.

"I don't want to look at the view," said Baer. "I want to look at you."

"At my age it isn't pleasant to be stared at in such a light as this," Tina replied.

"I wonder if the live-oak over there isn't still more sensitive about it," Baer laughed. "He must be quite as old as you are, and I'm the grayest one of the three. You're such a kid, Tina."

Tina was glad of the return of Dorothea. She hoped that Baer hadn't a critical taste in hats. Dorothea's skin was perfect, and her color radiant, in spite of the hat.

"I had a time with cook," Dorothea said complacently, "but one always does at first. She'll fall into my ways soon."

Her eye fell upon the smart cart and the big bay horse.

"Loosen that check-rein," she said to Jules, Tina's stableman, gardener and factotum. "Now, hop in, Baer."

Tina, with a feeling that was not altogether elation, watched them drive off. If only Dorothea wouldn't be quite so masterful! Baer would have to stand up for his rights after they were married, and Baer was such a dear boy. She felt very much drawn to him. She could see that Dorothea's attitude would make her still more drawn to him. They would be in the same boat —a sort of pair of Aunt Janes. She almost regretted that it was necessary to sacrifice him, but she felt the shadowy touch of Aunt Jane's cap on her head.

On the very spot where she felt its weight she presently pinned a scarlet

beret, and went down to the pier to amuse herself catching crabs. It was a very childish amusement, and one she felt Dorothea would not approve. She did not care for the crab as an article of food, but the crab as a playing thing amused her immensely. She enjoyed sitting in the sun and dangling over the edge of the pier a bit of meat tied to a string. It delighted her to see the crabs clinging desperately to the bait as she drew it up. After she had landed her prey she took a stick and pushed them off the other side of the pier into the water. Crabs were plentiful in the shallow bay, and the occasional splash of one returned to its native element never seemed to disturb its fellows. They took the bait every time, and when Tina had amused herself long enough it was her habit to drop the meat into the water and let them have it.

This morning she was so absorbed in her game that she forgot all about Dorothea till Baer's step on the pier behind her roused her.

"Where is Dorothea?" she asked.

"Dorothea," said Baer, "is having rather a time with the butcher. He seemed to be slow about falling into her ways, so I walked home. What are you doing?"

"Catching crabs for luncheon," said Tina. "They are very good fried—untidy to eat, but pleasing to the palate."

"How many have you caught?"

"None yet," she admitted.

"I suppose those you throw back are too young to be torn from their mothers. When you catch large ones, do you mean to carry them home in your hanky? I've been watching you fifteen minutes."

Tina bubbled into a laugh.

"They do look so funny," she said. "I like to see them squirm."

"What on earth would Dorothea say if she saw you?"

"I know," she hastened to answer, "it is silly. Dorothea wouldn't waste time so foolishly. That's why she accomplishes so much. Just think how

much she has accomplished! She's really wonderful!"

"She is indeed," Baer assented. "She is a perfect example of what the higher education can do for a woman."

Tina felt that his tone lacked enthusiasm.

"She's so clever," she said.

"And systematic," said Baer.

"And so thoroughly poised."

"And purposeful."

"And such a mind!"

"And so awfully conscientious."

"And—and—" she hesitated.

"Go on," said Baer. "It's your turn. We haven't exhausted her yet."

"No, she's inexhaustible," said Tina. "But I'm going back to the house now. You'd better stroll along and meet her."

She scrambled to her feet and threw the bait into the water.

"What pretty shoes you wear, Tina," said Baer.

Tina assumed an air of dignity.

"I think I ought to tell you that it isn't the thing to pay such bald compliments," she said. "Young girls may like them, but women of my age find them anything but amusing."

"What a foolish way to talk!" said Baer. "You always did wear pretty shoes, and you always liked to have me say so."

"There's Dorothea," said Tina, with relief. "Now run along and play with her. I have a great many letters to write this morning. One of them is to your father, by the way."

"Dad's great on letters," said Baer. "Dorothea got one from him this morning. I think he means to come down here."

"I hope he will come. We've been friends so many years. I helped him bring you up, you know."

"Good job, too, I say," he responded. "Not many women could have turned me out gray-haired at twenty-six."

Dorothea's crisp voice broke in.

"Well, Aunt Jane," she said, "I've attended to everything."

Tina spent the rest of the day in her room. Baer and Dorothea must be left alone together as much as possible.

That night she discussed the situation with her image in the glass. She felt that Baer was a little inclined to be flippant. He was not so attached to Dorothea as she had hoped to find him, but perhaps Dorothea had been a little too cavalier in her treatment of him.

"I wonder," she said to herself, "whether Dorothea means to marry him or not. If she does, of course he'll have to give in. If she doesn't—"

Dorothea tapped on the door.

"May I come in, Aunt Jane?" she asked.

Tina opened the door which communicated with Dorothea's bedroom.

"Come in," she said. "Let's talk."

Dorothea came in. She held a hairbrush in one hand, and her heavy hair fell over the shoulders of a red eiderdown bath-robe. On her feet were shapeless knitted slippers. Tina hoped that the house would not catch fire at night before Baer went away.

"You'd better get into bed," Dorothea commanded. "You'll catch your death on these cold floors in those jiggeree things you have on your feet. I wish I'd brought you some warm bedroom slippers."

Tina kicked off the pink mules and snuggled down under the covers. Bedroom slippers like Dorothea's! Probably Aunt Jane would have to wear a frightful red eiderdown bath-robe, too. She groaned inwardly. Dorothea curled up on the foot of the bed.

"Do you mean to tell me that's what you wear to sleep in?" she asked, eying Tina severely.

Tina pulled her lace-edged sleeve almost down to her elbow.

"Of course it is," she said stoutly. "I never catch cold."

"Still, you oughtn't to run risks," said Dorothea. "Outing flannel would be a great deal better for you. I'll lend you some of mine. You really do need somebody to look after you, Aunt Jane."

"I'm not so old as that yet," Tina protested.

"It isn't altogether a matter of age,"

said Dorothea. "It's temperament. You do need someone."

"I have you," said Tina, with a deceitful air of being glad of it.

"Yes, you'll always have me."

"But suppose—" Tina hesitated. "I don't say you're thinking of it, at all, but you might, some day, you know—marry, I mean."

Dorothea hugged her knees thoughtfully.

"I have been thinking of it," she admitted. "Of course I expect to marry, but even then I'll be in a position to look after you. How, by the way, do you like Baer?"

Dorothea's train of thought was as plain to be seen as an open book. Tina wriggled with delight.

"He's adorable," she said. "I don't believe any woman could ask for a better husband."

"I'm glad to hear you say so," said Dorothea. "Was his father a good husband?"

"I never knew Baer's mother. She died when he was a baby," Tina answered. "But I've understood that they were very happy. I remember he told me once that he had yet to see another woman who could be as dear to him as she was."

"When did he say that?" asked Dorothea.

"Oh, years ago. I haven't seen him often in late years."

"I met him in Paris," said Dorothea. "He crossed with us. If Baer is like his father, I'm sure he'll make a good husband."

"I know he will," Tina assented. "Any woman would be glad to marry him."

"That's what I think. He's splendid. I don't believe he's ever flirted with anybody in his life. He strikes me as being one of those men who never love but once."

Really, Dorothea's complacency was irritating.

"I have never happened to meet a man of that kind," said Tina, "but I do think one could trust Baer."

"I'm afraid I can't say as much for

your cook," said Dorothea, changing the subject.

"Don't you like her cooking?"

"I don't mean her cooking. I mean her ethical conceptions, her principles. One of her children was here today, and she gave him a basketful of things to carry home."

"I know," said Tina. "You see, she has three children, and they have to eat."

"Do you mean to say you don't know how much goes out of your kitchen?"

"The bills aren't large, or at least they weren't when I was here before," protested Tina. "She cooked for me then. I told her to take what she needed for the children."

"She'd probably have done it without telling," commented Dorothea.

"That's why I told her. I wanted to keep her honest. I like her children. I couldn't take their mother away from them to cook for me and not do something for them, could I? Her smallest boy comes every morning and builds my fire for me."

"Yes, and you pay him for it."

"Only two bits a time. I gave him fifty cents once, and he said, 'I hates to take it. You sure is imposing on me.'"

"You're so unsystematic," sighed Dorothea. "I dare say the woman's husband lives on you, too. I asked her today if she was a widow. She said no. Then I asked her what her husband does for a living, and she gave me a very evasive answer."

"What did she say?" chuckled Tina.

"She said, 'Ah, g'wan, honey.' I told Baer what she said. He said he fancied her husband must be a cabin-boy in the Swiss navy. I suppose he meant by that that the man has no occupation."

"Maybe he meant it as a joke," said Tina gleefully. "He has a sense of humor at times."

"A very keen one," said Dorothea, forgetting the mythical cabin-boy in her eagerness to defend Baer. "He's serious at heart, though. Do you know, he always seems to me as old as you are."

"I always think of him as being just your age," said Tina. "You seem so congenial."

"He takes a very deep interest in you. We were talking about you this afternoon. He thinks, as I do, that you need someone to take care of you."

"I wish you wouldn't go on saying that," Tina complained. "You act as if I were in my second childhood."

"I'm glad I came," said Dorothea irrelevantly. "It gives me such a good chance to see how you and Baer get along together."

"It's really more important to see how you and he get on together," said Tina. "It doesn't make much difference about me, you know."

Dorothea uncurled herself from the foot of the bed. She stood looking down at Tina, and her manner was uncommonly diffident—for Dorothea.

"Aunt Jane," she said softly, "I do hope Baer is going to be very fond of me."

"He's in love with you this very minute," said Tina. "He can't help showing it."

Dorothea looked down with a sudden change of expression. It was almost a stare. Then she walked slowly to the door. On the way she stopped to adjust a pillow in Tina's lounging-chair. An instant later the pillow flew across the room, and landed on the amazed Tina.

"Take that!" shouted Dorothea in a gale of laughter. "It's too funny for words!"

Tina sat up in bed and stared at the door closing on Dorothea's hilarity. What on earth had happened to the girl? Dorothea had never thrown a pillow at anyone before in all her life. What could be the matter with her? Did she laugh at the futility of Tina's hope of escape from Aunt Janedom by marrying her to Baer? Was she going to marry him, and did she laugh at Tina for urging what was already a foregone conclusion? That must be it. Of course she meant to marry Baer. She had practically admitted it. But

why should she laugh? Why on earth should Dorothea laugh?

Tina awoke next morning still puzzled. Baer and Dorothea were nowhere to be seen when she stepped out on the gallery, but presently they came racing up from the pier with a string of fish. They looked so well together, Tina thought, as she watched them come. Something in the sight stirred a strain of sadness in her. At Dorothea's age, she had been already two years a widow. She seemed to realize for the first time that she had been cheated of her girlhood.

"Just up?" called Dorothea as she strode along the violet-bordered walk. "We've been up hours. You ought to take a walk before breakfast, Aunt Jane. It would do you a world of good."

"I detest things that do me good," said Tina, none too amiably. "Breakfast will be ready in ten minutes."

"I'll take the fish to cook," said Dorothea, disappearing.

Tina lifted the trail of her morning-gown and went down the steps, about her usual morning occupation of cutting roses. Baer followed with her basket.

"I wish you'd cut a rose for me," he said.

"As many as you like. What kind will you have? Think of American beauties this size!"

She bent above the huge blossoms.

"Not those," said Baer. "They look like red cabbages. You plant a hundred-dollar bill, and one of those overgrown things comes up. Haven't you a Maréchal Niel anywhere?"

"Dozens," said Tina.

"They used to be your favorites."

"How did you know that?" she asked, surprised.

"You told me so. Don't you remember when I came to say good-bye before I went away to school? You had a great bowl of Maréchal Niels on the piano, and you were wearing a gown just the color of them."

"What a memory you have!" she said lightly. Surely Baer was not

going to ask her to remember the good-bye kiss, and the rest of all his nonsense!

"I never forget anything," he said. "You told me to be a good boy, and—"

"And you are a good boy?" she interrupted.

"I am," he answered seriously.

"Sha'n't we take some violets, too?" she asked, a little hastily. "Gather a handful for Dorothea. She's so fond of them."

"She told me she wanted bait," said Baer. "I think she said shrimp. Is the shrimp bush in bloom anywhere near? She's going to take me fishing again after breakfast."

"Dear Dorothea!" said Tina.

"She's an awfully good sort," said Baer heartily. "She's so sensible."

"I consider her handsome."

"She has nice hair, and she is kind to her Aunt Jane," said Baer, "and I am fonder of her than of any other girl I know."

Baer had confessed it. Tina found herself by no means so pleased as she had expected to be.

"I am very glad to hear you say so," she said.

After all, it is only the woman who is herself matched that really enjoys matchmaking. To most women nothing is less interesting than looking on at a love affair. One must be very young, in which case one sees in it a promise of the future, or very old, in which case one sees in it the reminiscence of a rosy past, thoroughly to enjoy it; and Tina was neither. She had no wooing of her own by which to measure Dorothea's. She had suitors during her widowhood, but she had no girlhood romance to remember. She hoped the matter of Dorothea's future would soon be settled. It was a strain on her. Dorothea was so exasperatingly sure that Baer had never loved before. And Baer's hints at his old-time fondness were such proof that he saw it for what it was—a mere case of calf-love, and there was a sting in that. Tina avoided them both as much as she could. Why didn't they

announce their engagement and be done with it? She wanted to be rid of them both. Baer was going to be thrown away on Dorothea. If he had only been ten years older—

"Nonsense!" said Tina firmly to herself.

She was saying this as she came out on the gallery one afternoon, book in hand. Baer had gone to the village with Dorothea after luncheon, but Tina found him sitting on the steps, playing with the setter pup.

"Where is Dorothea?" she asked.

"Captain Ryan is her keeper at present. She has taken him fishing. I didn't want to go."

"Oh," said Tina. "Have you had a quarrel?"

"We never quarrel. I stayed at home to talk to you."

"About what?" she asked.

"Myself," he answered. "You haven't treated me well, Tina."

"Nonsense!" said Tina.

"You haven't," he insisted. "You haven't given me any of your attention since I've been here. If it hadn't been for Dorothea I'd have had a very lonely time of it. Dorothea is very interesting, but I'd like a little of you, too."

"Well?" said Tina.

"Don't you like me as well as you did when I was a boy?"

"Better," she answered.

"I don't believe that you realize I'm a man," he said. "You think I'm still a boy."

"Nonsense!" said Tina again.

Baer rose to his feet.

"Tina," he said, "I want you to know something. When I went away to school you kissed me good-bye. Well—it sounds a silly sort of thing to say, but it's true. I've never kissed another woman. I always meant to tell you some day, and now that—" he paused. "I promised not to say anything till Dorothea told you, but—"

"I understand," said Tina softly.

Poor Baer! How hard he was trying to show her that he was worthy of Dorothea! How utterly wasted he was going to be on Dorothea!

"Did she tell you?" he asked.

"Not in so many words," Tina answered; "but I think she meant me to understand. I am very glad."

"It began in Paris," said Baer. "I'm glad, too. I think we're all going to be very happy."

The jangle of the telephone bell broke in on their talk. Never was interruption more welcome to Tina. She felt that she could not have endured another word. Baer went in to answer the call. When he came out it was to say that his father had telegraphed from New Orleans his arrival by the next train. The necessity of making preparations for him afforded Tina an excuse for escape. She did not appear again until dinner-time. Dorothea had not yet returned from the fishing trip.

"You must stay here and have dinner with her," Tina said to Baer. "I'm going to drive to the station to meet your father."

"Let me go, too," said Baer.

"And leave Dorothea alone? Never. I'm going to take the cart, and there's only room for two."

Two unexpected things happened. The train was on time, and Tina absent-mindedly took a turning which made her drive longer by half a mile. When she reached the station Mr. Mitchell had already started for Three Oaks in a station hack.

Tina drove home slowly. The night was sweet with the scent of roses. Out on the bay the moon-trail stretched wide and silver, straight away into the country of dreams. Off in the bayou the frogs were in the full swing of a chorus. Half heard, it sounded like mandolins and guitars playing an elfin two-step. On the gallery of one of the cabins which she passed someone was singing, "*Il va partir.*"

Why did people choose songs like that for moonlight nights, when one felt blue and lonely enough already? Her head ached. She meant to go straight to bed the instant she reached home. Baer and Dorothea could entertain Mr. Mitchell. She was in no mood to break in on their family party. She

turned off the road and drove across the pine barrens. She could reach the stable unseen that way, and then she might make her excuses through Liane, her maid. She threw the reins to Jules and stepped down wearily.

As she came nearer the house she caught sight of Dorothea's white gown moving in the rose garden. Dorothea's face was upturned to her companion, and—yes, he had taken her in his arms. It was Dorothea's kiss Baer would remember now.

Tina crossed a moonlit space and found her way to a rustic seat under a live-oak. The meaning of it all swept over her. She was thirty-three, and there had never been moonlight and a rose garden for her. To be a girl again! To be—yes, to be Dorothea there with Baer. She saw herself ridiculous—the sort of woman the world laughs at. She had always left love out of her plans for herself, and now it was Baer—Dorothea's Baer, out there in the rose garden, and she was alone with the emptiness of thirty-three unlived years—alone and old.

She understood now why she had clung to her youth. It was because she had had none of youth's rights. Dorothea had everything—youth, and love, and Baer. She laid her arms along the back of the seat, and hid her face against them.

She heard a step on the path, but she did not move. Mr. Mitchell was near-sighted. In the deep shadow he could not see her. Tomorrow he would rally her about her match-making—talk to her of the "young people."

"Why, Tina, what on earth are you crying about?"

Baer sat down beside her and gathered her in his arms.

"Don't cry, little one," he begged. "Tell me what the trouble is. Don't you want dad to have Dorothea? Why, I—"

"Your father!" gasped Tina. "Is that who she's with?"

"Why, of course," said Baer. "I told you about it."

Tina drew a little away from him.

"I expected her to marry you," she said.

Baer laughed softly.

"I didn't," he said. "She knew all along I was going to marry you. She's been doing all she could to make the match. I asked you to marry me years and years ago."

"How absurd!" said Tina unsteadily. "Why, I—why, I——"

"I know, dearest," he interrupted. "You needn't waste time telling me. You're ever so much older than I am, and I love you. I've loved you ever since I was a little boy."

"Oh, but Baer, it's so ridiculous!"

You'll be my grandnephew," Tina protested. "I'll be your father's aunt."

"No," he chuckled, "I'll be my father's uncle. My niece will be your mother-in-law. Don't you see how suitable that's going to make it?"

"It's so——"

"Dear heart, it's the one beautiful thing I've lived for ever since I can remember. Will you kiss me again now—not good-bye, but home forever!"

Dorothea's voice floated from the gallery:

"Where on earth is Aunt Jane? She really ought to have someone to look after her."



A SONG AT EVENING

CHILD of the sunrise, you;
A lonely singer, I;
Yet a song I weave of the dark and dew,
For you paused ere you passed me by.

Fair is a rose of June,
But keener the autumn rain;
Sweeter than morning's lilting tune
Is the threnody of pain.

For you morn's meadows wait—
Go, ere night's shadows are;
For though I pass not dawn's white gate,
I have known dusk's perfect star!

VIRGINIA WOODWARD CLOUD.



HIS SENSITIVE POINT

LEADER OF SCHOOL OF LITTLE FISHES—Come on, fellers, let's go and jolly the old octopus.

NEW LITTLE FISH—That'll be fun. How do you do it?

"Oh, we all get round him, and point our fins at him, and yell 'Trust!' It makes him crazy."